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ABSTRACT

Meant to be adapted by the K-4 classroom teacher to best meet the needs of students, this book describes Children's Own Stories, a program in which young children dictate their ideas and thoughts to adults, and develop a sense of community with their peers as they talk together, share their stories, collaborate on stories, and read and enjoy works of literature. The book presents detailed descriptions of the four principles that structure the Children's Own Stories program and suggestions for putting these principles into practice. The first section of the book describes the course content (discussing the four principles, what happens in the classroom, and benefits to the students), and includes a program timeline. The remaining four sections describe in detail the principles of the program: (1) Learning by telling: the dictation process; (2) Learning by collaborating: the group story; (3) Learning by sharing: sharing the writings; and (4) The link to literature. A list of 13 suggested readings and 36 brief biographical sketches of authors are attached. (RS)

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CHILDREN'S OWN STORIES

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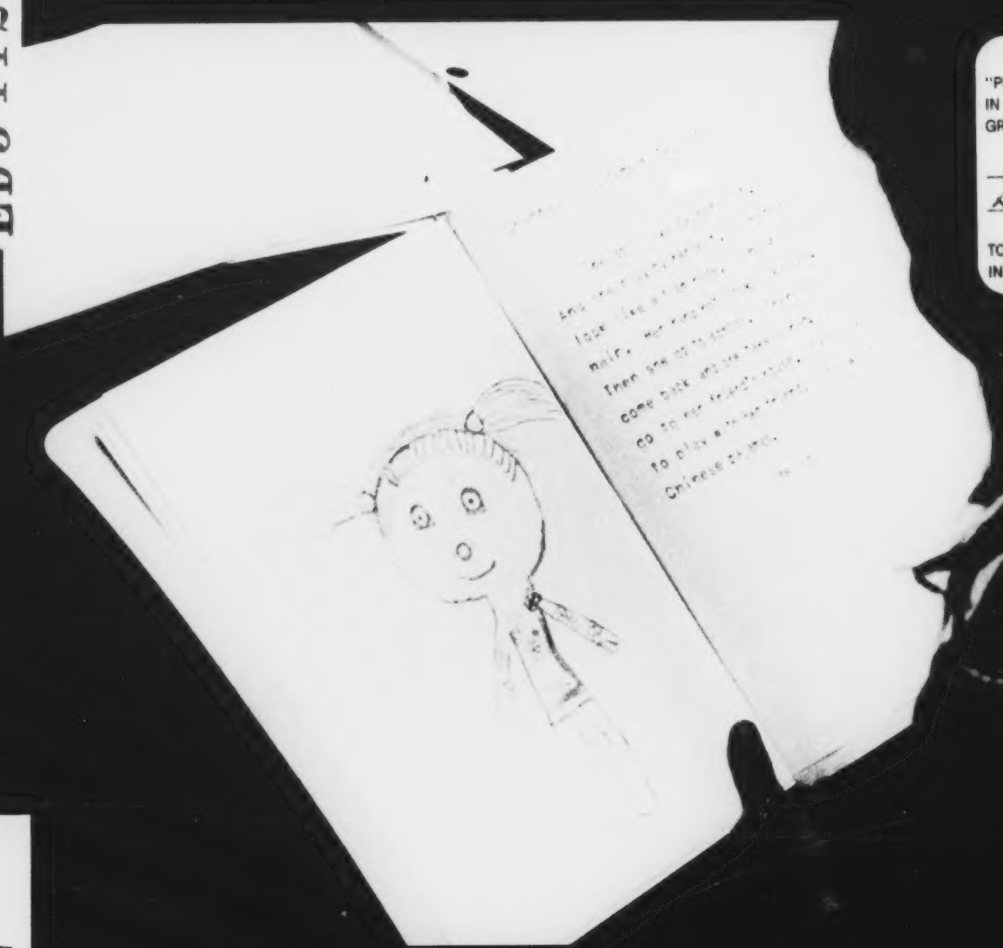

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CHILDREN'S OWN STORIES

A Literature-Based Language Arts Program *Grades K - 4*

Lynn Landor, Founder and Program Director
Elisa Crowder Gittings, Program Coordinator
Maria Jeffress, Program Co-Developer

Zellerbach Family Fund

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Back cover photo: These 2nd graders share a good book, encouraged in their appreciation of literature by the Children's Own Stories program.

Illustrations: Thanks to the many children from many schools whose drawings appear in this guide.

For copies of this program guide:
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Video also available: *Children's Own Stories,* a 34-minute orientation and training video. Contact San Francisco Study Center.

For more information about the Children's Own Stories program or assistance in implementing it, contact Lynn Landor, (415) 653-6634.

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THE CHILDREN'S OWN STORIES program evolved from my experiences as a San Francisco classroom teacher in the late 1960s and, 10 years later, from my master's thesis in the field of Early Childhood Education. The thesis addressed problems I had found in the language arts curriculum I had offered my students as well as deficiencies I remembered from my own primary school education.

I wanted to design a language arts program that would complement any teacher's curriculum, and would help children develop oral and written fluency based on the experiences they bring with them the day they start school and that continue throughout life. I wanted the program to show children that they had much to say, and that they could write and enjoy writing before and after they master these skills. Finally, I wanted them to understand that behind all books — especially the children's books written for them — are people who create stories from their life experiences, real and imaginary.

For 12 years, I've been refining the program and teaching techniques in collaboration with educators, classroom teachers and students in several Northern and Southern California school districts. They and many others have believed in and served this program.

I give special thanks to Ed Nathan, executive director of the Zellerbach Family Fund who, since 1982, has continuously supported the Children's Own Stories program in spirit as well as through funding.

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This work is dedicated to the people in our lives who help us recognize our resources for creative thinking, learning, inventing, working and living.

Lynn Landor, Program Director
Berkeley, 1989

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CHILDREN'S OWN STORIES

Introduction to the program

The program is great! It's a way to build confident readers and writers and at the same time it enables the teacher to integrate cooperative learning and literature into the classroom.

Patricia Marvin, 1st grade teacher

I think telling stories is fun. At the end of the year, we can take our books home and show our family what we made. I'm gonna put it somewhere safe and keep it for a long time. Until I die probably.

Clyde, 3rd grade

I definitely saw a change in my son's attitude towards writing. He freed up, "telling" wonderfully creative stories that seemed to make him feel more confident when he had writing.

Cathy Greenbaum, parent and volunteer

My daughter brought a friend home from school. I heard her say, "Let's play Children's Own Stories — I'll write down your story and then you write down mine, okay?" There's no question that the dictation program isn't just good for the children. It's fun, too.

Mavis Jukes, parent and volunteer

THESE QUOTES are from participants in Children's Own Stories, a program in which young children dictate their ideas and thoughts to adults. Most teachers, students and parent volunteers who have participated in the program express similar positive results.

Children's Own Stories is innovative, but its ideas and approach are not entirely new. The earliest expression of it is in the writing of John Dewey. Other educators who have pioneered a similar philosophy or similar methodologies are James Moffett, Lucy Calkins, Donald Graves, Flora J. Arnstein and Sylvia Ashton-Warner. And James Britton gets to the heart of the method in *Explorations in Children's Writing* (National Council of English, 1970), when he says:

"What is important, therefore, at the elementary school stage is that children should write about what matters to them . . . that in their writing (they) should write about what matters to them to someone who matters. The trusted adult creates an area in which

(A child's) words and actions are an indication of where he is in his development — they are the truth about him at that given moment.

Flora J. Arnstein, from *Children Write Poetry*

it is safe for the child to operate within it as himself."

The Children's Own Stories program can be used in elementary school classrooms at any grade level, but it is particularly appropriate in this form for kindergarten through grade 4. It is at this tender stage of verbal development that fluency of expression is especially important, while in the higher grades more conventional writing skills are emphasized. Children's Own Stories' approach is similar to the educational philosophy James Moffett expresses in his article, "Hidden Impediments to Improving English Teaching" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1985, p. 55):

"Literacy should be taught socially, through other people, in the way initial speech is taught, as a kind of incorporation into the human community. Such an approach ensures that hearts and minds are engaged in reading and writing from the outset."

The methods used in the Children's Own Stories language arts program — besides helping K-4 students acquire listening, speaking, reading and writing skills — can achieve many positive results. The teacher's receptivity to, acceptance and enjoyment of the students' storytelling promotes fluency of expression, encourages development of narrating and writing skills and engenders self-esteem. All students — including bilingual, non- and limited-English-speaking children — come to see themselves as people who can and do write with enjoyment.

Given the authority to choose what they tell, the children tend to dictate experiences from their own lives. Over time, as the children hear and read what they have dictated, they begin to feel confident that they have something to say. Seeing their words appear in print, they feel confident that they can write. As their stories grow into individual books, they connect their lives outside school with learning in the classroom and their own storybooks with the world of literature.

This program includes biographical sketches of selected authors that teachers use to introduce students to the link between life and literature. The teacher presents information from the sketches — and direct quotes from the authors — and reads from the authors' published works. Students come to understand and appreciate the interrelationship between the lives and works of published authors, a relationship similar to the students' storytelling process in the classroom. Through discussion, students are encouraged to think creatively about these connections and refer back to the richness of their own lives.

Students develop a sense of community with their peers as they talk together, share their stories, collaborate on stories, and read and enjoy works of literature. They become aware of their classmates' lives, the lives of authors, and the lives of characters in the works of literature, thus expanding their appreciation of people with backgrounds and points of view that may differ from their own. Students come to feel that they are part of a larger community that includes published authors who use their life experiences as a resource for writing.

The goal of Children's Own Stories is not to create a classroom full of aspiring authors, but to guide each student toward fluency, clarity and confidence in expression — oral and written — and an appreciation of diversity of background, experience and point of view as fostered in the classroom community and the world of literature.

I love what you're doing with the children — it's so needed. The schools need people who have enough imagination to know that reading is a delight and writing is a delight for kids if they can see the purpose of it. It's very exciting what's happening in California.

Charlotte Zolotow, author of books for children

COURSE CONTENT

Overview of the program

At Lincoln School, Santa Rosa, 2nd and 3rd graders dictate stories to a community volunteer.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

THE COURSE CONTENT of Children's Own Stories reflects the interests and experiences of the students in the program, but the educational process remains the same from year to year. This is a flexible guideline, meant to be adapted by the classroom teacher to best meet the needs of students and integrate Children's Own stories with the total curriculum. This guide is process-oriented, consisting of detailed descriptions of the four principles that structure the program and suggestions for putting these principles into practice.

The four program principles are:

- Learning by telling: The dictation process
- Learning by collaborating: The group story
- Learning by sharing: Sharing the stories
- Link to literature

All four program principles are to be applied at varying times and in various ways throughout the school year. Please see program timeline at the end of this section.

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Telling

In a heterogeneous, small-group setting, students tell their experiences, real or imaginary, to a receptive teacher, classroom aide or adult volunteer who types or writes down those experiences without suggestion or correction. Each student's thoughts and experiences are recorded exactly as he or she tells them, verbatim, including verbal idiosyncrasies and speech rhythms, so that when the teacher reads the stories back after dictation and whenever the student rereads them later, the child's voice and content ring true.

> *You have to discover how creative you are, and the only way to do that is by yourself. There's no right or wrong in creative work, no wrong way to write a story. There are so many ways.*
>
> Bill Peet, children's book author

This "learning by telling" method affirms each student's style of expression, even if initially it is unclear, rambling or repetitive. Encouraged by the teacher's acceptance, the children enjoy developing their writing capacity and eventually they dictate clear and better organized work. This editorial approach, which neither judges nor directs, allows students to view their dictated thoughts and experiences as their own writing. They come to identify themselves as someone who can write and enjoys writing. It assures them that what they think, say and do is valued; over time, the absence of criticism builds their confidence and gradually their positive attitude is reflected in improvements in their writing and carries over to other language arts activities.

In Children's Own Stories, the students provide the course content; they are the authorities on the subject matter. Children might dictate something that may not seem important to others, but is important to them. Most students enjoy their autonomy and exercise it with enthusiasm for oral and written expression.

cap cap cap
cap cap
hair hair
face
neck
dress dress

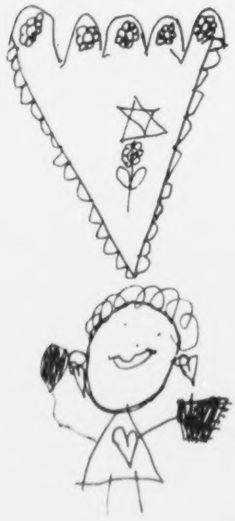
By narrating in the classroom what is meaningful in their lives and what they imagine, students begin to value their own thoughts and experiences. As the school year progresses, the students' weekly narratives accumulate and become their own treasured books. Each student's book is uniquely special, a collection of that student's memories, experiences, ideas that represent important moments in that student's life. It is a reference to give them perspective on themselves and their language skills.

Each student enters the classroom already possessing a rich body of knowledge and experience that is tapped through the storytelling. Thus, the stories and the experiences they represent can serve as references for the teacher to use to enrich the curriculum across all subjects.

Collaborating

Children build a story together. They choose a topic and, in turn, dictate one sentence after another that progress toward a finished story. The students inspire one another, sparking each other's imagination. They gain respect for others' ideas and have the opportunity to learn from each other. The experience encourages cooperation and cohesion within the group, and broadens the students' perspective on writing and storytelling. Listening skills improve as students pay attention to what has been said previously in the growing story. Reading skills improve as students read together their sentences and the finished story.

Collaborating on a story serves as a change of pace for the students as well as being a learning exercise.



Sharing

Students share their stories in a two-part process — within the classroom and beyond. In each instance, the decision to share is up to the student and it is perfectly acceptable for any of them to keep their stories private.

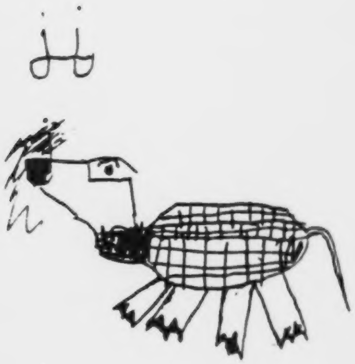
Sharing within the classroom occurs at about the third or fourth month of the first year students use the program. It occurs when the students are confident in their ability to produce written works. Their growing storybooks are placed in the classroom library so that the students may read one another's books between dictation sessions. Students may read their stories to the class or ask the teacher to read their stories out loud to the class. Story by story, the students learn about the lives of those outside their own small writing group. The information they gain helps them become empathetic with their classmates, deepening their understanding of diversity. This appreciation spills over into the classroom at large, giving the students more of a feeling of community.

Most of my stories I told aloud before I ever wrote them down. It was other people being interested that gave me the motivation to write them.

Alma Flor Ada,
children's book author

Sharing beyond the classroom occurs at about the eighth month, when the children's own story books are almost complete. It is a sensitive aspect of the program and care must be taken to ensure that the students do not feel ranked or judged by others. The decision to share outside the classroom is up to each student and it is perfectly acceptable for any of them to keep their stories private. Ways to share include making photocopies of students' books a permanent part of the school library, displaying stories on bulletin boards, or organizing an intramural Writers' Faire.

Sharing beyond the classroom gives students in other classrooms, administrators, teachers, and families at home the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the students through their books.



Link to literature

Throughout the school year, the teacher, using the biographical sketches of pertinent published authors, synthesizes information about their lives, reads aloud works of literature by those authors and quotes from them about themselves and their writing. Without being told, most students eventually make the connection between their work in the classroom — the dictating of stories about their thoughts and experiences — with how published authors draw on their life experiences in writing their books. This helps the students to understand the creative process and develop greater intimacy with the authors. Toward the end of the year, the teacher should make explicit this link between the literature and the students' work, but not until the students have had ample time to make the connection on their own. Several weeks may be spent on one author, depending on grade level, student interest and books available. This attention to authors becomes a part of regular read-aloud time and extends to independent reading time as students are encouraged to read the books on their own.

The link can become clear by using special questioning strategies in discussion sessions that help the students to:

- Consider the author's life experiences in relation to the students' own experiences.
- Consider the author's life experiences in relation to the author's written work.

The questions in the program that are suggested as the basis for discussion are intended to stimulate the children to refer back constantly to the richness in their own life experiences. These experiences are the primary resource for creative thinking, learning, inventing, working, living.

There are three parts to this link with literature: Part One, authors and their books, is most closely related to Principle One, the dictation process; Part Two, folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling, to Principles Two and Three, the group story and sharing the stories; and Part Three, linking authors' own stories and children's own stories, clarifies the relationship between the world of literature and the children's experiences putting their ideas and thoughts into written words.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM

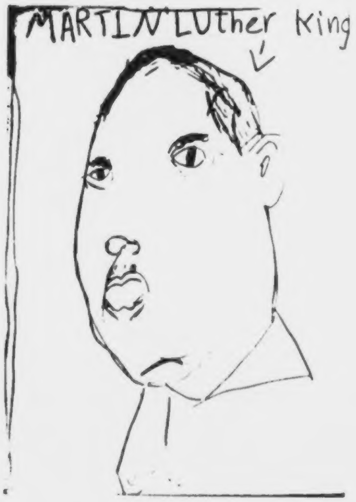
It is the Children's Own Stories teaching approach that creates the learning environment and encourages personal growth. The program's success depends on the teacher's ability to drop the traditional active role and assume a receptive role as recorder of the course content and facilitator of the inquiry process. The teacher is patient, encouraging and accepting — qualities fundamental to good teaching.

While the program seems to require a large portion of instructional time, many of the activities include what the students would already be doing as part of any literature-based program.

All activities are correlated with the California English Language Arts Model Curriculum as follows:

- Discussing, listening, reading, writing and studying literature within an integrated program.
- Reading and responding to literature in an active way.
- Drawing on students' past and present experiences.
- Working in small heterogeneous groups.
- Including students' books in classroom and school libraries.

Following is a summary of what happens in the classroom and suggestions and examples for implementing the principles. The teacher, however, is the best one to determine how the program principles will best work in his or her classroom.



1. Learning by telling: The dictation process

Students work together in small heterogeneous groups.

Students choose their own subject matter for their weekly dictation.

Students illustrate their stories.

Dictation and illustration occur in an accepting environment without suggestion or correction.

A trusting relationship develops between the teacher and each student.

Students make a connection between their lives outside of school and learning in the classroom.

Each week, stories and illustrations are saved; this material grows into a book for each student.

Student stories are a rich resource for the teacher's curriculum development.

Ways to schedule dictation groups

The dictation requires five small group sessions per week of approximately 30-50 minutes, depending on grade level, in order to give each student the chance to dictate once a week. Optional ways to arrange for dictation include:

- One day a week of reading/language arts time is devoted to dictation; each group dictates on that day. Or,
- Some reading/language arts time each day is set aside for one dictation group; groups rotate from day to day. Or,
- Dictation is one center activity; groups rotate from day to day.

Dictation also may be accomplished with the help of in-class assistance. For instance, a team teacher, a teacher aide, or an adult volunteer may take dictation or may oversee the rest of the class while the teacher works with the dictation group.

2. Learning by collaborating: The group story

Students work in a small, cooperative group.

Students create stories together.

The group story is an alternative to individual dictation, occurring in the same time slot, which can be scheduled every three to four sessions to build enthusiasm and cooperative learning skills and give the children a change of pace.

3. Learning by sharing the stories

Stories are read out loud to classmates within and beyond the dictation groups.

Students' books become part of the classroom library.

Photocopies of the completed books become part of the school library.

This program principle has two parts: Sharing within the classroom and sharing beyond the classroom. Small-group discussions occur during the regular small-group time. Students decide how to share their writings, and participation is voluntary.

Good art comes from a balance between your thinking life and your feeling life. Even when you're little, you think something and you feel something.

Lucille Clifton,
children's book author

4. Link to literature

In Part One, teachers use the biographical sketches of authors and their published books to introduce students to the link between literature and personal experience. The order of presentation — biographical information and author quotes first, then reading the author's books, or vice versa — is up to the teacher. Part Two introduces students to folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling.

This program principle usually requires one or two sessions per week of approximately 20 minutes each. Several weeks may be spent on one author or one culture's folklore, depending on the grade level, student interest and available books. This attention to literature becomes a part of regular read-aloud time and extends to independent reading time as students are encouraged to read the books on their own.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

Children's Own Stories conveys to the students important personal messages, many of which help them develop a positive self-concept. Students come to understand that:

- What they think, say and do is valued.
- Each student is the authority on the subject matter he or she dictates.
- Each individual's daily life experiences, real and imaginary, form a rich resource for talking and writing.
- Each individual is part of the classroom community of people who can write and enjoy writing.
- Each student, including the bilingual, non- and limited-English-speaking child, can create his or her own book.
- Each is part of a larger community, including published authors, who use their life experiences for writing.

Children's Own Stories develops students' language arts skills and appreciation of literature:

- Fluency in oral and written expression.
- Narrative techniques: sequence, logic, sense of story.
- Foundations of self-editing.
- Growing skill in reading.
- Enjoyment in learning about authors' lives.
- Enjoyment in reading works of literature.
- Seeing how authors' lives relate to their work.

C.O.S. IN ACTION

Life is never colorless. Some people think what's important is on "Entertainment Tonight" or MTV. But there's nothing more important than a big, fat, red robin in a white winter setting.

Arnold Adoff,
children's book author

Reading specialist, San Diego

If we can help children see that they are the experts in their world and they can share their world, they'll see themselves as writers. Nothing succeeds like success. Once they get started, they're on a roll — the more they read, the more they write. It's really the secret for beginning readers and writers.

2nd grade teacher, Santa Rosa

I sometimes have bilingual children use the time when others are dictating to create a story in their native language and then ask if they want to read the story to the class. Their classmates like to hear these stories, even if they can't understand them, and the stories are a great jumping-off point for discussing other cultures and the gifts one culture can give the other

1st grade teacher, Berkeley

Some children are anxious to write before it's their turn to dictate. I encourage them to do so using their own inventive spellings. These stories are included in their books along with the dictated stories.

Classroom volunteer, Berkeley

Children often are stuck about what to write. I had a little girl who sat down and said, "I forgot what I was going to write about." So I said, "Do you want to write a story about I Forgot?" She laughed, then wrote about all the things she forgot. It's a matter of thinking of something that may work for the particular child.

2nd grade teacher, Santa Rosa

During dictation, you should expect everyone to behave and wait their turn. I also take time at the beginning, if two children are arguing, to get them to talk about it, which helps solidify the group. I had a Vietnamese boy who the other children were teasing because of the way he talked, so I showed a picture he'd drawn of his country and we talked about it for a few minutes. Then the group went more smoothly. You have to use your intuition.

Classroom volunteer, Santa Rosa

Raul's behavior was very disruptive. He was older than the other children and a relative non-reader in the third grade. When he realized that anything he wanted to tell was acceptable in our group, he got more interested in being a part of the group and his behavior changed. Because he was more relaxed, his unusual artistic ability revealed itself, and the other children admired it. His stories became longer, more detailed, more positive. Toward the end of the year, he began to show real interest in reading his own stories.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Principle One
Learning by telling:
The dictation process

Principle Two
Learning by collaborating:
The group story

Principle 1

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Once a week throughout school year

Principle 2

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Approximately once a month

Principle Three
Learning by sharing:
Sharing the stories
Within the classroom
Beyond the classroom

Principle 3 Part 1

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
		▨	▨	▨
▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Principle 3 Part 2

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
			▨	▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Principle Four
Link to literature
Part 1 Authors and their books
Part 2 Folklore and oral tradition
Part 3 Connection to children's writings

Principle 4 Part 1

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
▨		▨		▨
	▨		▨	
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Principle 4 Part 2

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
			▨	
▨		▨		▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Principle 4 Part 3

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
			▨	▨
▨	▨	▨		
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Formal link to literature

Principle 4 Part 3

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
			▨	▨
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June

Informal link to literature

PRINCIPLE ONE

Learning by telling: The dictation process

Putting the principle into practice — an overview

In the small group setting, a Lincoln School teacher takes dictation as other children illustrate or reread their stories.

Objectives

The students will:
Identify events and ideas of importance to them
Dictate stories of importance to them
Demonstrate enthusiasm for telling stories

Teaching situation

Small-group instruction — 5-6 students per group
Each group should be heterogeneous, a microcosm of the class, made up of students with varying abilities and attitudes toward learning

Teaching time and frequency

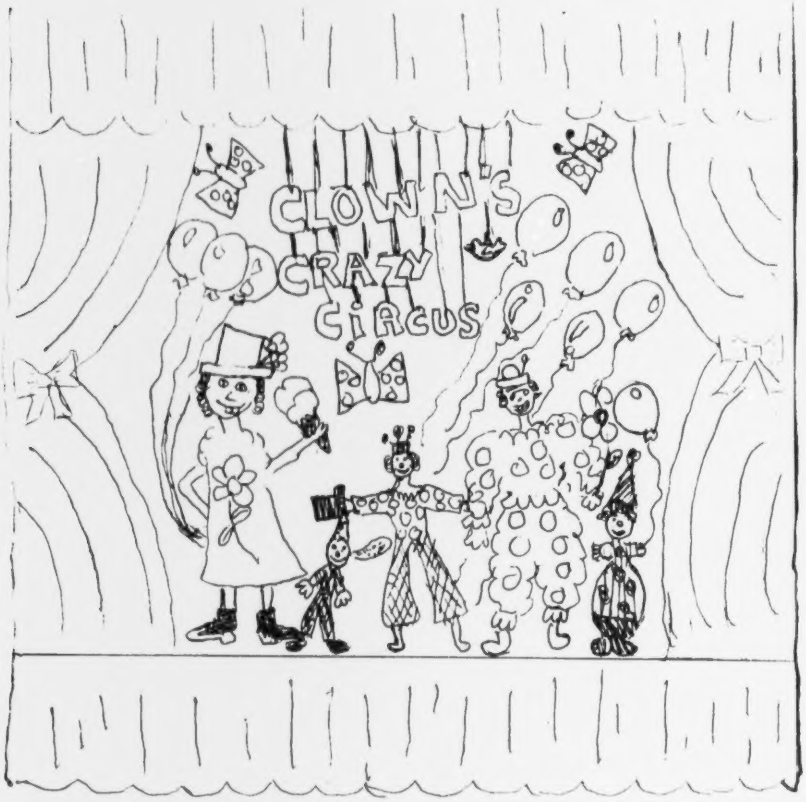
20-50 minutes each session
1 session for each group weekly throughout the year

Learning opportunity

Dictating stories

Key terms

author, expression, story, writer, writing



PRINCIPLE ONE

The dictation process

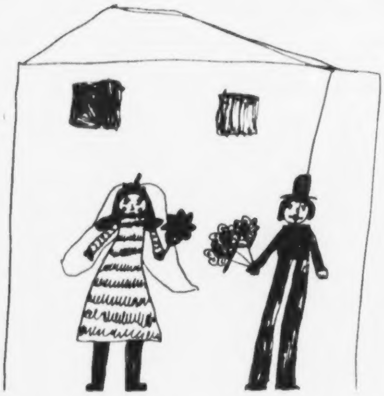
PREPARATIONS

Materials

Typewriter or computer with word processor and printer
8 1/2" x 11" paper, blank, with 3 holes
3-hole punch for computer paper
Pencils
Crayons and/or felt-tip pens (colored)
Manila folders, 1 per student
Brads, 3 per folder, to secure the stories and illustrations
Writing paper for students
Liquid Paper correction fluid or correction tape
Cardboard magazine holders
"How this book was made" statement — make photocopy for first page of each student's book (optional)

Key terms

Author: Person whose life work is creating books.
Expression: Oral and written communications that reflect a student's own unique rhythms and idiosyncracies of speech and writing.
Story: The product of a student's dictation. It may be one word, phrase, sentence, a paragraph or a developed account with a beginning, middle and end. Most students progress to dictating complete stories, but there should be no pressure, suggestion or expectation to produce that kind of writing.
Writer: A student who can and does produce writing through dictation as well as writing on his or her own.
Writing: Creating stories through dictation as well as through rough drafts, clusters and inventive spellings.



Establishing the small groups

Divide the class into heterogeneous groups of no more than six students. Membership in these groups remains the same throughout the school year.

The guiding principle for selecting the members of each group is diversity: of ability, ethnicity, personality and other factors that will enrich the group experience. The teacher is the best judge of which students to group together. The "slower students" in the full class often are the ones who excel in these writing groups and often have the most to offer the other children; the C.O.S. groups give these children opportunities to regain lost status — in their own eyes and in the eyes of the other children. Students learn from each other; therefore, creative, insightful groupings enhance the potential of the program.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Pick out a story, tell it the way you would like it, or make one up, and make your own drawing for it. You, too, can write or re-tell stories and draw pictures for them just as other writers do.

Margot Zemach,
children's book author

Explaining the process to the students

Tell the students that once a week at a specific time and day they will be dictating and illustrating a story about something that is important to them. The story can be one word or an idea they've been thinking about or a description of some activity that they enjoy. It is entirely up to them. When the story is done, it will be read back to them for final approval before they illustrate it. The stories and illustrations will go into each student's own folder after each session and the folder will be at the group every session.

Laying the ground rules

Help each student become clear about behavioral expectations during the weekly sessions. The groups' ground rules ought to be kept simple and to a minimum. The fundamental rules are:
1. Be quiet enough that the teacher can hear the person dictating.
2. Show care and respect for one another.

Ask the following sorts of questions to help each group set its ground rules:

- What do we do while waiting for our turn so the teacher can hear the student who is dictating?
- How do we want the other students to behave toward us?
- What do we do when students disturb others?

Write down the ground rules, get agreement on them from each student in the group and then post the rules where all can see them so they can serve as a reminder if necessary. When the students help set their own rules, they are more likely to respect them.

What students can do until it's their turn to dictate

Let the students know that when they are awaiting their turn to dictate they may:

- Listen — to each other's stories as they are being dictated and read back.
- Read — their own and each others' stories.
- Draw — illustrate the story they will be dictating or draw anything they wish. They can decorate their story folder. They can help a classmate with a drawing.
- Write their own stories using inventive spellings to include in their books.
- Talk quietly — one to one or as a group.

Such activities are readily acceptable in most C.O.S. groups. Most students prefer to do something relatively quiet so they can keep one ear on the person who is dictating because everyone is interested in what the others have to say.

More ways to connect speaking , writing and reading

It is best to include the following methods at the request or suggestion of individual students, allowing them to freely use other language arts skills.

Students may begin a cluster of ideas or a rough draft while they are awaiting their turn to dictate. This gives the students who are eager to dictate a way to begin "getting down on paper" their thoughts and ideas. When the students dictate, they might begin reading from their rough draft or referring to their cluster. Ask the students if they would like to include their rough drafts or clusters in their books; this can show the evolution of their story.

- Students may ask to read aloud a story they've written outside the dictation group as their dictation account. By reading the story out loud to the teacher, who types or writes it, the students often hear and see things they want to change. The dictation process gives them an opportunity to tell parts of the story in new or different ways.
- Illustrations may be drawn in frames or as a storyboard and referred to as the student dictates the story.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Dictation /writing

Once a week, take dictation from each student. Keep track of who in each group goes first so that everyone who wants to gets a chance to dictate first.

Before the student starts to dictate, record his or her name and the date on the story paper. Either write, type or word process what the student tells, without suggestion, correction or criticism. The student should be seated next to the teacher during dictation where he or she can see their own words appear in print or on the computer screen as spoken.

Allow the student time to deliberate. Ask a student who appears to be at a loss for words if he or she wishes to hear their story so far, then read back what has been dictated.

When the student finishes telling the story, read it back to make sure it is exactly what the student wanted to say. Allow last-minute changes.

> *Beyond a normal show of interest, you don't comment. You neither praise nor blame; you observe. You let everything come out, uncensored; otherwise, why do it at all?*
>
> Sylvia Ashton-Warner, from *Teacher*

Techniques to help anyone having difficulty getting started

- Suggest that the student close his or her eyes and be very quiet for a few minutes, then tell whatever comes to mind.
- Ask them to recall those times when walking or riding to school and nothing in particular is happening. What do they think about then?
- If they draw a picture, it may help them think of something they consider important. Then talk about the picture or something the picture evokes for the child.

Technique to help make closure on long stories

When a student has a long story to tell and time is running out, tell the student he or she may either end the story very soon or continue it next time. Often, a point of excitement is a good place to pencil in "To be continued." The student then looks forward with anticipation to the next session.

Color coding

To simplify the dictation sessions, color code the magazine holders — a different color for each group — and color code each student's folder along the spine to correspond to his or her group's color. This will make it easy to get folders at the beginning of dictation and put them away afterward.

I discovered that if you let children dictate a story to you and then let them read back their own words, they are so taken with their own thoughts that they read without even realizing they're reading!

Charlotte Zolotow,
children's book author

Follow-up

Place the completed story in the student's folder. Remind him or her to sign and date the illustration when finished and make sure the artwork is with the story in the folder at the end of the session. It is important for students to know their stories and illustrations are being carefully collected and stored: It gives value to their efforts.

Bring the students' folders to each dictation session and pass them out at the beginning of each session.

Under separate cover, you'll find the "How this book was made" statement, which you may photocopy and add as the first page of each child's book. To not intimidate the child, however, it's best to add this page a couple of months into the program.

SAMPLE DICTATIONS

The following examples illustrate the development of children's stories over a period of time. While the children's early attempts to express themselves sometimes appear unconventional in structure, they often contain a spirit of expression that should be acknowledged.

Kevin, 2nd grade, had a twin brother. For the first few years of their lives, the boys spoke only twin language, which delayed their language development.

First dictation session:

Kevin drew two round pumpkin faces with open mouths; one had one tooth, the other two teeth. He pointed to the first face and told the teacher to write *First tooth.* Then he pointed to the second face and dictated *Second tooth.*

Second dictation session:

Went to Tim's house. Went into the cave and we digged.

Eight months later:

Last year we made an addition to our house. And we are still building it. We all put the tile on the floor together. It was light *brown and black and it was made out of clay. The tiles are not the smooth kind. They are rough, but not very rough. It took about two days to finish the floor.*

Hoang Le, 3rd grade, a refugee from Vietnam, had been in the United States for three years before participating in Children's Own Stories.

First dictation session:

I like green. I like green because green is the paper. Green is a chalk and a chalkboard. Green is a shirt. Green is a hat. Green is a book. Green is a color. Green is a map of the United States. Green is September. Green is shoes. Green is a box. Green is a leaf. Green is the color of my country. Green is a picture. Green is my house in Vietnam. Green is the color of my sister, Hoa Le. Green is a pant, Green is a flower. Green is the eyes. Green is a water. Spinach is green. Green is a grass. Green is a butterfly. Green is a balloon. Green is a car. Green is the color of the animal. Green is me.

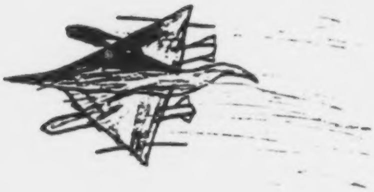
Five months later:

In 1985 I wanted to be in the Talent Show, but I don't have anything to do in the Talent Show. On March 8th on Friday night I saw a movie about magic. The man did magic and I liked it. I want to copy it, but it's hard to copy. Then I saw an easy one. He did it with his duck. I know how to do that. I do it for the 1986 Talent Show. He does it with a duck, but I don't have a duck. I will do it with my rat. I know how to do it because it's easy to do. I need two people to help me. Because one needs to pick a card and one to stay in the box. I am happy that I thought of something.

C.O.S. IN ACTION

Kindergarten teacher, San Diego

Once a week, my class does dictation for about 20 minutes during language arts. I break the class into five groups, all working at the same time with me, my aide and three parent volunteers taking their dictation. There's a 3rd grade teacher at this school who has the same setup, but because the children are a little older, they're in groups for 50 minutes.



3rd grade parent volunteer, Chula Vista

I'm one of two parents and a retired man from our community who help take dictation from the kids. The teacher has one group meet each day during language arts time. I've gotten a lot of satisfaction out of helping the kids, especially seeing how they've developed over the year we've been working with them.

Kindergarten teacher, San Diego

When young children, especially, see their spoken language written down, they start to make a connection that printed words in a book are something someone might have spoken. It makes a perfect transition between speaking, writing and reading.

Bilingual resource teacher, Santa Rosa

Some of my Limited English Proficiency students speak English relatively well, but they still have syntactical difficulties and reading and writing problems. They've been a mystery to me. Children's Own Stories gives me samples of their oral and written language that help me diagnose where the difficulties are.

1st grade teacher, San Diego

Children's Own Stories has been really valuable for students with special needs. I have a little girl, an RSP student, who's mainstreamed here. She's so creative when it comes to dictating her ideas. She speaks in metaphors, and the dictation has helped me learn so much about her and her life.

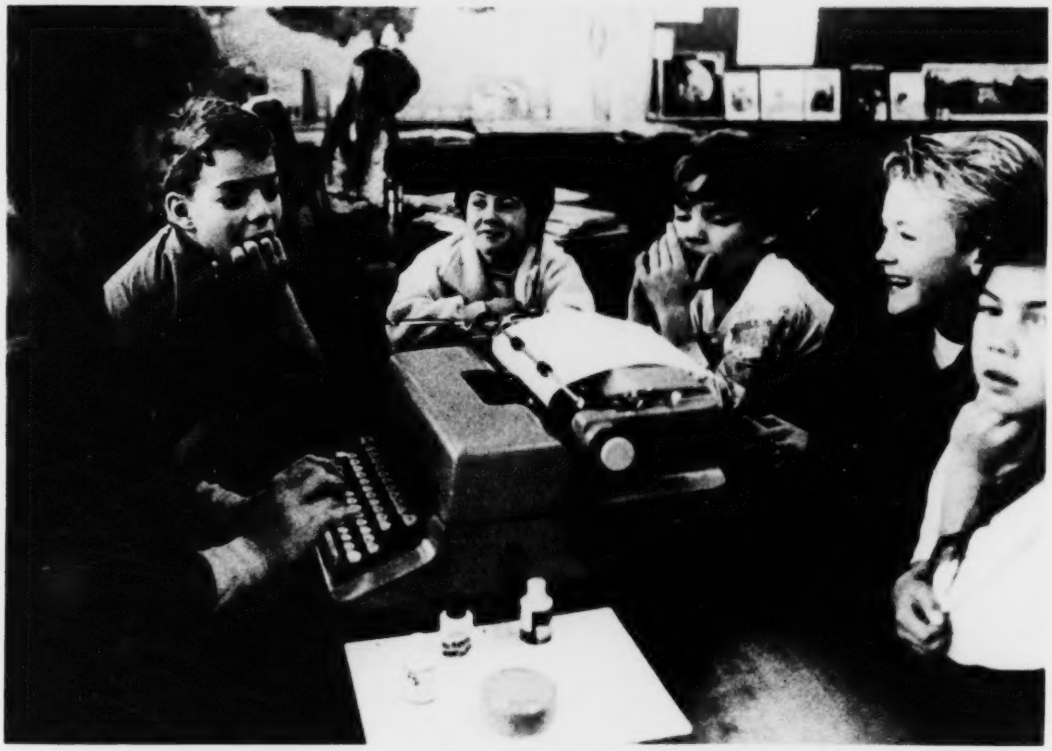
Classroom volunteer, Santa Rosa

So many children's stories are infiltrated by violent media imagery, it's not easy to remain the open, impartial listener to students' dictation. If we allow the children to work through these stories, they often find their way to their own stories — to their own *selves.*

PRINCIPLE TWO

Learning by collaborating: The group story

Putting the principle into practice — an overview



The teacher types as a group story unfolds in a 3rd grade classroom at Penngrove School.

Objectives

The students will:
Dictate a sentence that contributes to the group story
Listen to the ideas of others
Enjoy writing as a group process
Develop cooperative learning skills

Teaching situation

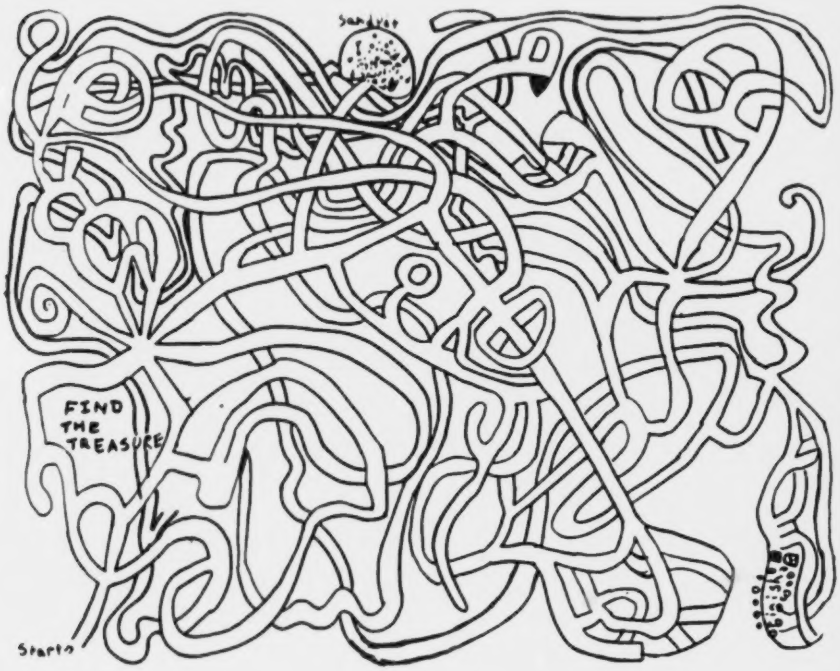
The small heterogeneous groups

Teaching time and frequency

20-60 minutes each session, depending on grade level
1 session approximately every 3 or 4 weeks or as needed to vary the dictation process, build group cohesiveness and have fun

Learning opportunity

Making the group story


Sandyer
FIND THE TREASURE
Start

PRINCIPLE TWO

The group story

A session may begin with a group story; however, there usually is time for some individual dictation afterward. Some teachers do a group story every week, others less frequently.

PREPARATIONS

Materials

Use all the same materials for the group story as for the dictation process. In addition, make certain the students' folders are available at each session. Each group story also needs to be recorded, illustrated, stored and photocopied so that each child has a copy, which is added to their individual folders.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Explaining the process to the students

Tell the students that today they will be writing a story that uses everyone's ideas. They can title the story before starting or wait until it's finished to give it a title. Let them know they will decide what the story is about and what the title is when it is finished. One of them will start the story, then each person in the group will add a sentence. Building on each other's ideas, they take turns dictating until the story ends. Then each student will make his or her own illustration for the story. You will make a copy of the story for each student in the group and have it ready for them at the next class session to include in their folder with their illustration.

Emphasize that they should listen closely to the student who precedes them so they can add something that will expand on that idea or action. Ask the students to consider:

- Why is it important to listen to what is said before it is their turn?
- How will they know when the story is finished?

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Writing and illustrating the group story

Take dictation from each student in turn.

Option 1: Type or write as with individual dictation.

Option 2: Write the story on a chalkboard for all to see as it develops.

Type or write each student's contribution to the group story just as you would for their individual stories — without comment or criticism. Make sure they take turns dictating in an orderly manner that gives equal opportunities for storytelling. Go around the group more than once. If at any point someone gets stuck or has trouble staying on track, read back the story to help the students decide what comes next or how to end the story.

When the group decides the story is finished:

Option 1: Read it to them for their approval and appreciation.

Option 2: From the chalkboard, let students read their own contributions.

If the children wish, they may give the story a title. Make sure there is enough time left in the class session for each student to do their own illustration of the group story.

The group story gives a chance for interaction between children who may never have talked together. You know, with a class of 30, the children get isolated at times.

3rd grade teacher, Chula Vista

Follow-up

Collect each student's illustration.

Before the next class session, make a copy of the group story for each student.

At the next session 1) Put a copy of the story in each student's folder along with his or her illustration of it; 2) Before resuming individual dictation, take time to reread the group story out loud; the children can follow the story in their own folder.

SAMPLE GROUP STORIES

The following group stories were dictated by one group in a 3rd grade class at the beginning and end of the school year.

Boogie Dance

I did a boogie dance. The pig did join along. We danced all over the place. The pig liked dancing. And we danced all night long. And we went to the movies and saw a dance called the Pig Boogie.

The Turtle Family

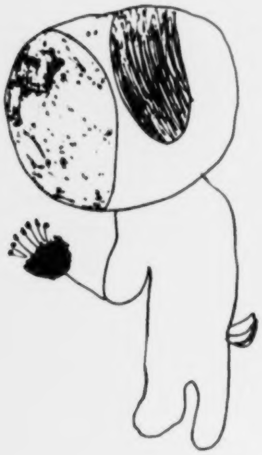
Once upon a time there was a turtle family, and the mother's name was Elizabeth, the father's name was John, the baby's name was Christine, and the sister's name is Amy. They all lived in a hollow tree.

One day John went out to find some food and a bird pecked on his shell and John didn't like it. Then John pulled his head and his feet into his shell and he acted like a rock and the bird flew away.

John went home and told his family a bird pecked him and explained how he protected himself. The mother said, "What is that on your back? It looks like half a worm."

John thinks for a while. Then he says, "Oh, yeah, that's why the bird was pecking on me."

C.O.S. IN ACTION



2nd grade teacher, Oakland

Group stories give the kids a chance to build on each other's ideas. The only direction I give them is to listen carefully to the person who comes before you. Sometimes they decide together what they want the story to be about, but just as often they go blind and build it as they go along. Either way, they really enjoy it.

K - 4 resource teacher, San Diego

Usually I take group story dictation on the typewriter, then make photocopies so each child has a copy to go with the illustrations in their book. Other times I take dictation on the blackboard — that way everyone can see the story at once as they're telling it. Later, I type it or write it out and make a copy for each child's book.

Kindergarten teacher, San Diego

Just working together is a challenge in kindergarten. For the group story, we do a lot of verbalizing about what we want and what we want to happen. They argue over this and that, and some children are quite adamant about what they want to happen, so they have to compromise. There's real value in that.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRINCIPLE THREE

Learning by sharing: Sharing the writings

Putting the principle into practice — an overview

Penngrove School 3rd graders share dictated stories, an activity that increases appreciation for diversity.

PART ONE:
Sharing the writings within the classroom

Objectives

The students will:
Identify ways to use their stories within the classroom
Decide how to share their stories
Enjoy sharing their stories with classmates

Teaching situation

The small groups or the entire class

Teaching time and frequency

20-60 minutes each session, depending on grade level
1 or 2 sessions starting at the 3rd or 4th month

Learning opportunity

Sharing the writings within the classroom

PART TWO: Sharing the writings beyond the classroom

Objectives

The students will:
Identify ways to share their stories beyond the classroom
Decide how to share their stories
Enjoy sharing their stories with parents, other students, principal, teachers

Teaching situation

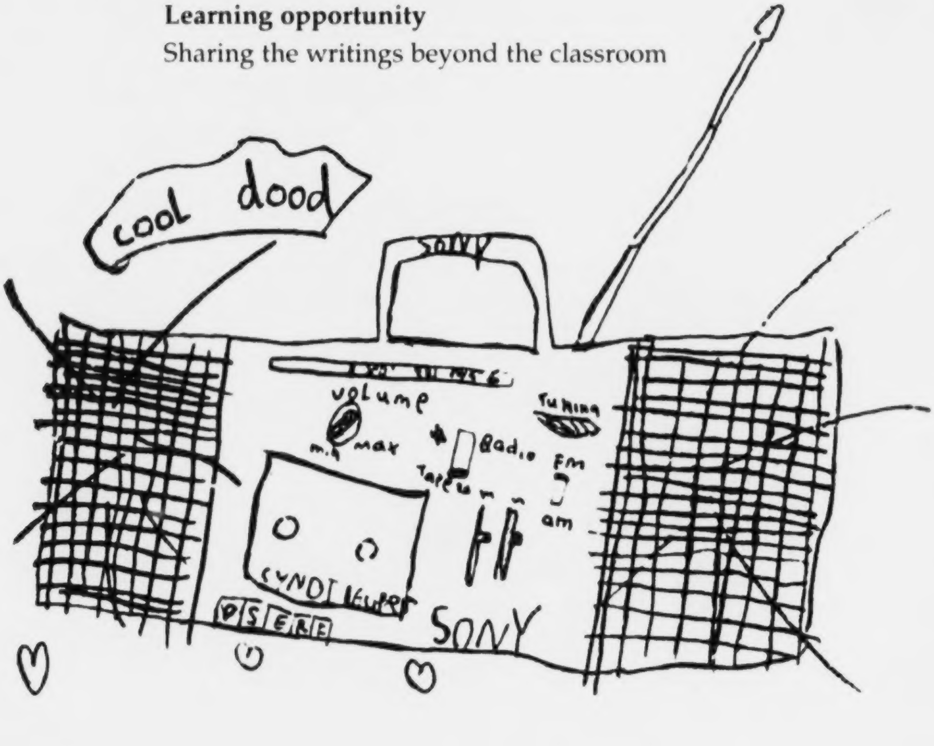
The entire class

Teaching time and frequency

20-60 minutes each session
1 or 2 sessions near conclusion of school year

Learning opportunity

Sharing the writings beyond the classroom



PRINCIPLE THREE
Sharing the writings

Sharing their writing and illustrations gives students the opportunity to learn from others and to let others learn from them. This is a two-part process: At first the stories are shared within the classroom; then, near the end of the school year, the stories are shared with students and others outside the classroom and the school.

PREPARATIONS

Materials

The children's folders containing their own stories.

PART ONE: LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Encouraging the students to share

By the third or fourth month, most students are eager to share their writings with others, and within the classroom is a good place to start. All students will benefit from discussing why and how to do this. However, each student must decide whether to share his or her work. It is perfectly acceptable for any of them to keep their stories private.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Sharing the writings within the classroom

Prepare the students to consider sharing their writings outside their small group by making non-judgmental comments such as:

- Your folders are getting really full with things that have been important for you to tell and write about.

Then ask the students questions, such as:

- Do you think other students would enjoy reading or hearing your stories?
- Would you like to read a few of your stories out loud to the class, or have the teacher read them out loud?
- How can your writings be included in the classroom? Can they be included in the classroom library and read by other students during library time and sustained silent reading (SSR)?

Help each student decide whether to participate in the sharing and, if so, how. Make certain each student feels good about his or her decision, whether they share or not.

Take dictation as time permits.

> *(Writing) is sharing yourself and getting a chance to have other people mirror and reflect you. It's saying, "I'm me."*
>
> John Steptoe,
> children's book author

Follow-up

Help students carry out their ideas about sharing their writings within the classroom.

For those who wish to participate, collect their story folders and display them in the classroom by group in the color-coded boxes with each group's assigned color.

Instruct the students to pay attention to the color of the box from which they take the books they read, and return the books to the proper box when they are finished.

Put the boxes containing each group's story folders in the classroom library.

PART TWO: LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Encouraging the students to share

As the end of the school year approaches, the students will have long been sharing their writings with the other students in the class. By the eighth month their folders are thick with their writings and most students are eager to share with a larger audience. All students will benefit from discussing why and how to do this. Each student decides whether to share his or her writings. It is perfectly acceptable for any of them to keep their stories private.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Sharing beyond the classroom

Prepare the students to consider sharing their writings beyond the classroom by making non-judgmental comments, such as:

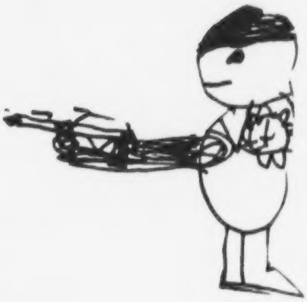
- It's been really interesting and fun to hear your stories.
- Your books are an important addition to our classroom library.

Then ask the students if they'd like to share their writings with others beyond the classroom. Ask them questions, such as:

- Do you think others might enjoy reading your stories? If so, who?
- How should we make the stories available to them?
- What do you think about putting photocopies of your books in the school library?
- What about organizing a special event such as a Writers' Day or Writers' Faire where you can read and display your stories?

Help each student decide whether to share his or her stories beyond the classroom and, if so, how. Make sure each student feels good about his or her decision, whether they share or not.

Take final dictations as time permits.



Follow-up

Help the students carry out the ideas for sharing beyond the classroom by assigning tasks for the option chosen.

If school resources permit, make photocopies of the students' books to be included in the school library so others can check them out. Children who choose to have their books in the library receive a Certificate of Recognition from the librarian. The certificate is provided under separate cover.

Also provided is a letter to the parent or guardian that accompanies the book when the child takes it home at the end of the school year.

SAMPLE DICTATIONS

The following stories or excerpts were collected from kindergarten through 4th graders. Some were dictated when the students began the Children's Own Stories program, others at the end of a year or more with the program.

Once there was five elves. And they lived underground. And they liked to play games together. And they had a little dog. And when they played games, the black elf always won.

Marvin, kindergarten

I had a scary dream. It was about the biggest cemetary of the world. It is the ocean. Everything dies there except the world.

Sharon, 1st grade

Once there was a big volcano. And the volcano was silver. And nobody knows why. And then once it exploded. And a little man came out. He was a scientist.

Jonah, 1st grade

I went to Marriott's with Uncle Ray. And we went on the Demon. And I went on the Fast Wheel. And I took my picture there with Santa Claus. And I went on the regular roller coaster. And I ate a hot dog. And I came back home.

Caster, 2nd grade

We got our pumpkin on Sunday. Mine is round. My brother's is oval. His is bigger but it won't make a good pie. Mine will make a tasty good pie. Mine is the best pumpkin in the world and in the cities and in the countries and in Japan!

Kirk, 2nd grade

Everybody is a rose. I am a rose, too. But some people aren't roses. They pick on me at school because I am a rose. I am just so

The biggest thrill was to see the parents' response to their children's books at open house. Each child just had to sit right down and read it cover to cover.

Reading specialist, San Diego

small that they trip over me. The teacher trips over me, too. . .

Sarah, 3rd grade

Tomorrow is the parade. I am going to be with my father. I am going to walk with my dad. My mother made me a skirt to wear. It is purple. It has big birds on it. My dad is going to wear his feathers. He dances at the Roundhouse by the ocean. He dances around a fire. He has a whole bunch of feathers. He keeps them at my grandpa's house. He hangs them up. . .

Tanya, 3rd grade

I have a stereo in my room, man. My door is over to the left. I have a little puppy named C.C. And by my stereo I have two speakers and my bed. My puppy sleeps with me. And between my speakers I have a tape box on the right and the left.

Raymond, 3rd grade

John and Raul found a witch in a creek. The witch's name was Carmen. She cast a spell on John. She turned him into a rabbit. She turned Raul into a carrot. The rabbit got the carrot and ate it. After he ate the carrot, John said, "Yuk!" and he spit out the carrot. When the rabbit spit out the carrot, Raul and John became their own selves. That's the way we like it, uh-huh!

Raul, 3rd grade

My little gray cat's about two years old. He has a little bit of white spots on him. He's real cuddly. He likes right here under his whiskers scratched and behind his ears. He's caught a big, fat bird and two rats. He was real sick when we got him. My mom gave him lots of medicine to cure him. My dad hates cats, but now Smokey and my dad will sleep together.

Erica, 4th grade

I like violet flowers and I like running through the woods. It is fun because they never catch up to you.

Diane, 4th grade

C.O.S. IN ACTION

We have a primal need to write. We need to make our truths beautiful, and we need to say to others, "This is me. This is my story, my life, my truth." We need to be heard.

Lucy McCormick Calkins,
from *The Art of Storytelling*

Classroom volunteer, Santa Rosa

For the first half of the year, Sara expressed her isolation through metaphor in the stories she dictated. She was a kind of outcast in her classroom. By the end of the year, she began including the other children in her stories and sharing her stories with them, which enchanted them, and they began including her in their stories. Sara gradually became an appreciated member and active participant in our little community.

3rd grade teacher, Oakland

This program encourages sharing, and the children love it. They like deciding which of their stories to read to their group or the whole class. Of course, some children prefer that I read their stories to the class, and that's okay, too. I think their biggest thrill came last year when we had photocopies of their books become part of the school library — then they were sharing with the whole school.

...for Readers

PRINCIPLE FOUR
The link to literature

Putting the principle into practice — an overview

Author Mary Robinson reads The Amazing Valvano *and describes how she wrote it.*

PART ONE: Authors and their books

Objectives

The students will:
Hear about authors' lives and their writing
Listen to stories by these authors
Be exposed to the language of literature, story structure and a variety of story topics
Identify and discuss how an author's life experience can be source material for his or her writings

Teaching situation

The entire class

Teaching time and frequency

Weekly, starting the second week of the program
Approximately 20 minutes for discussing biographies when introducing a new author
Approximately 30 minutes for reading and discussing an author's stories, that day or the following day

Learning opportunity

Becoming acquainted with authors and their works

PART TWO: Folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling

Objectives

The students will:
Listen to and enjoy folk and fairytales from various cultures
Learn that folklore is often created by a group storytelling activity that is part of the universal oral tradition
Learn how some writers collected and recorded in writing these tales or stories

Teaching situation

The entire class

Teaching time and frequency

30 minutes approximately every other week

Learning opportunity

Becoming acquainted with folklore and the oral tradition

PART THREE: Linking authors' own stories and children's own stories

Objectives

The students will:
Identify how their activities in the dictation groups are similar to what all authors do, which is to use life experiences as a resource for writing
Identify themselves as people who are comfortable expressing themselves in writing

Teaching situation

The entire class

Teaching time and frequency

Approximately 30 minutes during one class period near the end of the school year

PRINCIPLE FOUR

The link to literature

The link to literature in this program is comprised of three parts. Part One, authors and their books, is most closely related to Principle One, the dictation process; Part Two, folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling, is related to Principles Two and Three, the group story and sharing the stories; and Part Three, linking authors' own stories and children's own stories, clarifies the relationship between the world of literature and the children's experience putting their ideas and thoughts into written words. Most students will begin making this connection themselves as the Authors' Own Stories element of the program progresses, but it should not be made explicit to the students until the school year is nearly over.

PART ONE: Authors and their books

The students become familiar with authors and their writing as the teacher relates biographical information about published writers, quoting them about their lives and their writing, and reading from their works. The California State Department of Education's *Recommended Readings in Literature, K-8* can serve as one source of authors and literary works. C.O.S. has provided additional recommendations for most authors.

PREPARATIONS

Materials

Biographies and quotes selected from the Authors' Own Stories section of this manual and several works by each author selected. Teachers should consider the book selections as just a beginning, and are encouraged to search for other books by the authors to share with students.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Explaining the process to the students

Tell the students they all will be meeting together once a week to hear about some authors whose books you also will read to them. After the readings, you will all talk together about the author's life and stories and the author's statements about writing. As the students hear about these authors' lives and ideas and listen to their stories, ask them to think about what seems most important to the authors and how this shows up in their books.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

The order of these two activities, listening to information about the author and listening to the author's stories, can be reversed according to what you believe will be most effective with your students. You also may want to vary the order from author to author to keep the activities fresh and interesting to students.

The duration and frequency of the two activities depends on the students' interest and attention span. For example, once or twice a week a kindergarten teacher might talk about an author for 10 minutes, then right afterward read one or two of the author's books. A 4th grade teacher, however, might spend 20 to 30 minutes introducing an author, then read from that author's books over the next few weeks.

> *A sense of authorship comes from the struggle to put something big and vital into print, and from seeing one's own printed words reach the hearts and minds of readers.*
>
> Lucy McCormick Calkins,
> from *The Art of Storytelling*

Listening to authors' biographies and quotes about writing

Tell the entire class about the life and work of a published author. Read the author's quotes about writing and how he or she draws story ideas from life experiences. Then lead a group discussion, asking any of the following types of questions,which refer the students back to the richness in their own lives:

- Is there anything that happened in the author's life that reminds you of something that happened to you?
- What things did the author do that you would like to do?
- What do you think is important to this author? Is this important to you?

Follow with reading from the author's works then or at the next session.

Reading stories by published authors

Read from the author's works. Follow the reading with a group discussion, asking such questions as:

- Does this story make you think of anything that has happened to you?
- Does this story seem real or imaginary? Why?
- How do you think this story shows what's important to the author?
- If you had written this story, would you have changed anything?
- Does this story remind you of another story you have read?

Depending on the author and the story selection, the connection between life and work may be direct or oblique and this will partly determine your questions to the class. Conclude the discussion with information about where to find the author's books if the students want to read them on their own later.

Follow-up (optional)

Have students act out favorite parts of an author's book.
Invite local authors of children's books to read from their works and talk about how these books came into being.

C.O.S. IN ACTION

3rd grade teacher, Penngrove

After reading some of Leo Lionni's books to my students, I asked them a few questions: What do you think interested this author as a child? Do you think the person who wrote these books is old or young, a man or a woman? After they thought a while and told what they thought, I gave them some facts about Leo Lionni and read them some quotes from him. They were really surprised by how close they got — and in some cases, how far off they were — about the author. The session really made the books and the author come alive.

2nd grade teacher, Santa Rosa

First I give the children some biographical background on the author, which I get either from Author's Own Stories or from my own library research. Then I ask the kids to imagine what kind of stories this person would write — funny or sad stories, stories with people or animals as the main characters, and so on. Over the next week or two, I read the author's own books to the class. They're thrilled to discover the connections between the writer's books and his or her life.

Reading specialist, San Diego

When the children know background information about an author, it's really motivating. When we move through the books, the children are reading to confirm — "Oh, yeah, he liked animals and he wrote about animals," or "She loved the desert and wrote about it." They're confirming their own predictions, and it helps them internalize the author's purpose. It's a great way for them to extend their own thinking.

PART TWO:
Folklore and the oral tradition of storytelling

The writing and publishing of stories and novels is a relatively recent development — scarcely more than two centuries old — evolving from a literary tradition that was revolutionized in the 15th century with the invention of movable type.

But the folklore — myths, legends, folk tales and even jokes — that enriches most of the world's cultures stems from an oral tradition that is ancient, predating reading and writing.

The oral tradition began with dance and ritual as people were forming social groups such as tribes and clans. Later, words accompanied the movements and stories took shape.

Any member of a clan could be a storyteller, including the children. But, because the stories were not written, the storytellers were not bound by a script. The tales were fluid and often changed in the telling. Although initially the stories may have been based on real life situations, they became embellished by the storyteller's imagination.

These folk tales were created to both entertain and educate. Characters and images that today seem fanciful, to those early audiences likely rang true. Often, the folk tales would explain how the world was made, how it is supposed to work, and how people should behave. Folk tales instilled cultural beliefs and social values.

IN THE BEGINNING

Folk tales, created and communicated anonymously, were passed down through the generations in a process and form so remarkably similar from culture to culture that the oral tradition seems universal.

Folklore from every continent has been documented, analyzed, classified and cross-referenced, each image, theme, character and situation thoroughly studied. Such extensive scholarship makes clear that, without social contact, cultural groups on their own conceive of archetypal motifs that transcend national boundaries. Without books or shared language, different peoples throughout the world independently have created folklore that is similar in many respects.

For example, the Maiden in the Tower motif, the story of Rapunzel in Western folklore, has versions in Cuba, Lithuania, Ireland, West Indies, France, Germany, Sicily, Turkey, Greece and elsewhere.

The theme of the boy who steals the giant's treasure — Jack and the Beanstalk — is found in the folk tales of Finland, England, Dominican Republic, Poland, France, Italy, Albania, Chile, Turkey and many other countries.

Tales of magic are extant in every culture whose folklore has been studied, as are the astounding exploits of the hero, a character type who crosses all cultural boundaries.

Folklore includes jokes, songs, anecdotes and other enduring elements of popular culture.

The work of the students in the Children's Own Stories program is in the oral tradition. Not that what they write is likely to be passed down through the ages, but they draw from their life experiences and share them with their peers.

It is important that the teacher make no direct connection between the students' dictations of group stories and the folk tales. Allow the students to come to this realization on their own.

Materials

Selected folk tales. There are scores of tales from Europe and the United States from which to choose; folk tales from Latin, Asian and African countries are much more difficult to obtain. The following books are useful resources:

Aardema, Verna. *Tales from the Story Hat* (African). Coward: New York, 1960.

Aardema, Verna. *More Tales from the Story Hat* (African). Coward: New York, 1966.

__________. *Tales for the Third Ear* (Equatorial Africa). Coward: New York, 1969.

__________. *Behind the Back of the Mountain* (South Africa). Dial: New York, 1973.

Bierhorst, John. Many collections and compilations of Native American folklore and mythology.

Courlander, Harold. *The Tiger's Whiskers and Other Tales and Legends from Asia and the Pacific.* Harcourt Brace: New York, 1959.

Folktales from Asia. Six volumes covering all Asian countries. Sponsored by the Asia Cultural Center for UNESCO. Weatherhill: New York, 1975.

Hamilton, Virginia. *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Around the World.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.

__________. *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales.* Knopf: New York, 1985.

Kitchen, Margaret. *Grandmother Goes Up the Mountain and Other Mexican Stories.* Deutch: London, 1985.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children.* Gale Research: Detroit, MI, 1982. (New edition available in 1989.)

Minard, Rosemary. *Womenfolk and Fairy Tales.* Houghton: New York, 1975.

Vuong, Lynette D.. *The Brocaded Slipper and Other Vietnamese Tales.* Addison-Wesley: Reading, Mass., 1982.

Yolen, Jane. *Favorite Folktales from Around the World.* Pantheon: New York, 1986.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Explaining the process to the students

Tell the students that some days they will be meeting together to hear folklore — fairy tales, legends, myths, folk tales — many of which were *told* for years before being written down.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Discussing the oral tradition of folklore

This activity involves the entire class for 20-30 minutes. The discussion prepares the students for the reading of folk tales by informing them about the creative context in which folklore evolves. Prepare the class for the folk tales by explaining the oral tradition of storytelling. Stress the following points:

- The oral tradition is universal. In every culture, before the people could write, they told stories that were intended not only to entertain but also to pass along cultural beliefs and social values, a way for tribal elders to teach the young about life.
- These stories were told by one person or by groups such as families and tribes and the stories represented a group's collective wisdom and shared beliefs.
- These stories were passed from generation to generation, and in the retelling were embellished and changed.
- Many of the folk tales are told in cultures around the world with different characters and settings but similar stories.

Tell the students that as a story was passed down through the generations, the people who told it may have embellished it out of their own experiences or imagination. They may have made up variations out of boredom or because they forgot parts of the original or perhaps even because they decided to adapt the story to teach a new lesson. Also tell them that often the originator or creator of the story is unknown, anonymous.

Ask the students:

- Have you heard stories from your parents or grandparents that have come down through the generations in your family? Ask if someone would like to tell a family story to the class.

Let the students know that even today in many places — homes, schools, villages — around the world stories are being told without first being written.

Reading folk tales

Tell the students that many people have collected folk and fairytales and written them down so they could be preserved and reread by others over time.

Read one or more stories from folklore.

Follow-up

Follow the reading with a group discussion, asking such questions as:

- What kind of a person would you put into a folk tale?
- Where would your folk tale take place?
- Is there any recent event that you think might become a folk tale?
- Is there any contemporary person who could become a hero or heroine in a folk tale?

Optional activities:

Have students write their own folk tale.

Teacher tells a story, real or imaginary, and invites a few children to retell it in their own words. Ask students to notice how the story changes in the retelling.

PART THREE:
Linking authors' own stories and children's own stories

The goal in this wrap-up session is to have children understand that 1) The books they enjoy hearing and reading often come out of the real life experiences of real people; and 2) While the children are not authors, they are members of a large community of people who care about their lives and can create written works out of their thoughts and experiences.

Follow-up

Recommend books the students can check out from the public library to read over the summer vacation. Correlate with individual as well as class interests. Coordinate with public library activities, children's theater performances and family activities or adventures. Encourage the children to continue writing their own stories.

SUGGESTED READINGS

California State Department of Education Publications

Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program (1986)

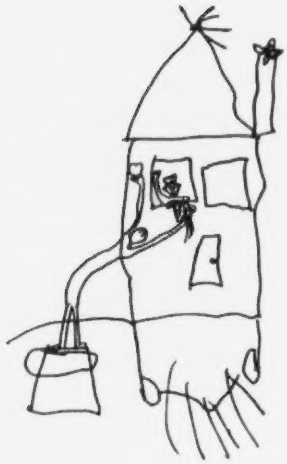
Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program (1987)

Recommended Readings in Literature K-8 (1986)

Literature for All Students: A Sourcebook for Teachers (1985)

English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide K-8 (1987)

English-Language Arts Framework K-12 (1987)



For information and copies of these publications, contact the State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.

Other informative books:

Ashton-Warner, Sylvia, *Teacher.* Simon and Schuster: New York, 1963.

Becoming a Nation of Readers. Center for the Study of Reading: Urbana, Illinois, 1985.

Britton, James. *Language and Learning.* Penguin: London, 1970.

Calkins, Lucy M. *The Art of Teaching Writing.* Heinemann: Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1986.

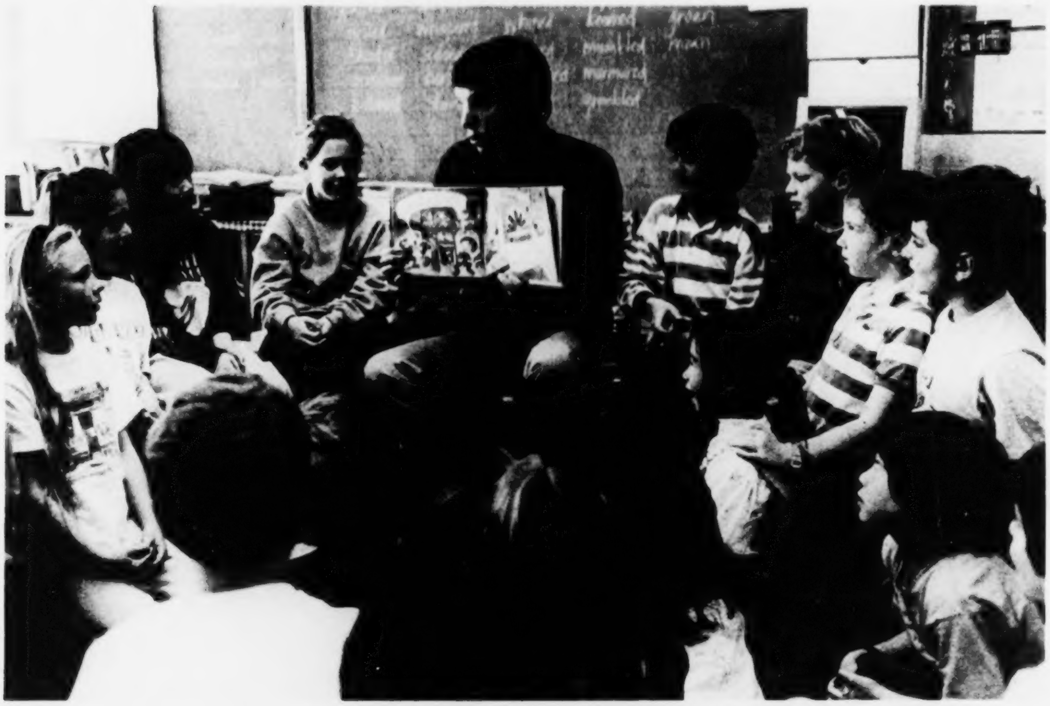
__________. *Lessons from a Child.* Heinemann: Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1983.

Graves, Donald. *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work.* Heinemann: Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1983.

Moffett, James. *Active Voice.* Boynton/Cook-Heinemann: Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1981.

AUTHORS' OWN STORIES

Biographies



At Prospect School, El Cerrito, author Thacher Hurd tells how he created Mama Don't Allow.

THIS SECTION of the curriculum concerns the life and works of selected authors of children's books. Most elementary school teachers are familiar with many of these authors, the majority of whom are cited in the California State Department of Education's essential reference book, *Recommended Readings in Literature*. In addition, there are some authors included here who are not listed in *Recommended Readings* but are appropriate for Children's Own Stories. We have listed *Recommended Readings* citations when available, but they do not include the entire body of an author's work.

Brief biographical information focuses on each author's personal data relevant to his or her development as a writer. These biographical sketches are based on library research on each author, information furnished by the authors' publishers and, in many instances, telephone interviews and correspondence with the authors themselves. Therefore, many of the authors are quoted

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extensively about their views on writing and how specific books they've written were drawn from or inspired by their own life experiences, especially during childhood. One invaluable library source was *Something About the Author*, a multivolume reference work from Gale Research.

The biographical sketches are presented in various forms. Some are in essay form, meant not to be read to the class but to relate the author's life and works in a succinct, orderly summation. In another form, information about the author is grouped into categories: personal data, published works, direct quotes from the author about writing in general, and direct quotes relating specific books to life experiences.

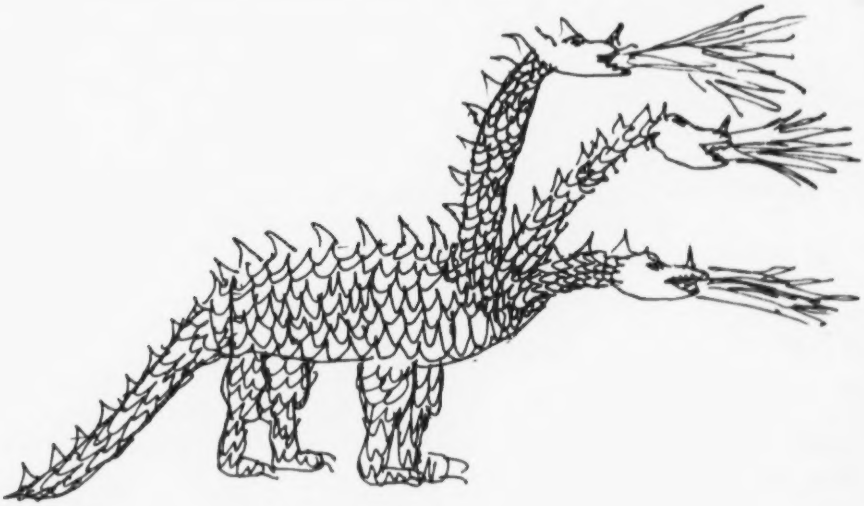
If you feel portions of the sketches are appropriate for reading to the children, afterward use a questioning strategy that asks the children to imagine what sort of books this particular author might write given his or her life experiences.

Or, you may select elements from the information and weave your own story about an author, using data and quotes provided here and adding information you find in your own research.

Biographical information generally precedes the readings from an author's works, though this order may be reversed. If the books to be read are juvenile books, and the students are very young, they can begin to make connections between the author's life and what he or she writes about.

If the students are older and their tastes are beyond the level of the author's books, the books still may be read and discussed in light of how the author's interests and experiences are reflected in the stories. This learning opportunity has the flavor of "research" for the older students.

The biographical sketches were researched, written and edited by Maria Jeffress and Lynn Landor of Children's Own Stories and Geoffrey Link and Marjorie Beggs of San Francisco Study Center.



ALMA FLOR ADA 1938 -

Core and Extended Folklore	**Grades**
Asserín, Asserán (Maria del Pilar de Olave, co-author)	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
How Happy I Would Be	K - 1
Me Gustaria Tener	K - 1
Strangely Strange Visitors	K - 1
Una Extraña Visita	K - 1
The Song of the Teeny-Tiny Mosquito	K - 2
La Canción del Mosquito	K - 2
Who Is Hatching Here?	K - 2
¿Quien Nacerá Aquí?	K - 2
Friends	K - 3
Amigos	K - 3
My Name Is Maria Isabél	K - 6
Me Llamo Maria Isabél	K - 6
The Gold Coin	2 - 5

"IN MY COUNTRY, after five in the afternoon, the children were sent out to play on the sidewalk," says Alma Flor Ada, who was born and grew up in Cuba. "My home was a very old house with a very big porch, so all the neighborhood children would gather on that porch and play games — singing in circles or running after each other, typical nursery games. I loved the games so much, I collected some of them for my book, *Asserín, Asserán*."

Ada has spent most of her adult life shuttling purposefully between Spanish-speaking countries and the United States. She left Cuba when she was 17 and lived in Colorado where she learned to speak English. She returned to Cuba, then spent one year in college in the United States. From there, she went to Spain, her grandparents' country of origin, and then to Peru, where she taught high school and university classes. After two years of post-doctoral work as a fellow at Harvard University, she returned to Peru. Since 1976, Ada has been a professor in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco.

Her first children's book, *Sonrisas*, was published in 1967. "Most of my stories I told aloud before I ever wrote them down," she says. "And it was other people listening and other people being interested that gave me the motivation to write them."

Many of Ada's children's books reflect her childhood experiences in Cuba and her adult interest in bilingual education. *Amigos* (Friends), published in both Spanish and English, is set in a quiet town where the little squares — who live in square houses with square yards and square windows — are told not to play with the little rectangles or the little circles, who live in houses of those shapes. But little ones will explore. One day, two little circles get tired of going in circles. They take a roll into town and meet up with a little rectangle; together they create a wagon, which goes fast and thrills them. When two little squares join them, they become a locomotive. They arrange and rearrange themselves, finding joy in being together.

As a youngster, Ada played with many different children, but she was conscious of the lines of separation that most people observed — rich and poor, black and white, Catholic and Jew. "I wrote this book to explain reality to the child I was," she says. "I was telling her that she made the right choices, even though sometimes those choices put her in uncomfortable situations. I also wrote this story for the children of today, hoping they will understand the beauty of getting together with other people who may be very different from themselves."

One theme that runs through many of Ada's stories involves change that comes from understanding the truly important things of life. In *The Gold Coin*, a thief sees a woman holding a coin and saying, "I must be the richest woman on earth." The woman not only devotes her life to helping others, she attempts to give her one coin to every family she helps, but each refuses saying someone else may need it more. The thief believes she has a lot of gold and ransacks the shed where she lives; finding none, he pursues her from place to place. In the pursuit, he is forced to interact with other people for the first time in many years — to eat and talk with them, to help them with field work so they will loan him a horse to cross a river. When he finally catches up with her at her shed, she offers him the gold coin. A storm is brewing that threatens to completely destroy the shed, and she is torn between fixing her roof and going out to help a woman who's about to give birth.

The thief is a changed man. "Go," he tells the woman, "I'll take care of your roof. I'll fix it." And then he says, "Here, take the gold coin. The newborn might need it more than I do."

Ada says *The Gold Coin* combines several real-life experiences. She works extensively with migrant families, telling them stories that they can analyze with their children as a way to encourage discussion of values and clarification of conflicts, as well as reading and writing at home. "I was moved by the generosity of the farm workers, how hard they work, how kind they are to each other. I was feeling blessed by having the opportunity to work with them — so in a way, I was like the woman in the story, very rich, but not by having money." She also sees the story as a warning to herself: "I sometimes get too caught up, not by theft but by work, and too overwhelmed by concrete things, maybe missing the things that are most important."

(Writing) gives you a lot of power because you can redress life and change it any way you want.
Alma Flor Ada

Finally, *The Gold Coin* derives from a story her grandfather told her when she was about 15. He had once been a rich man, a landowner. His wife, Ada's grandmother, was gravely ill. He had the opportunity to go to the capital and save his money by removing it from the banks. Because he chose to stay with his dying wife, he lost his fortune but never regretted it. Recalls Ada, "He said to me, 'I'm not a rich man, but I'm okay. But even if I weren't, money is something that is useful, but it should never rule your life. It should never be what you base decisions on. And this is the one thing I want to teach you.' He never referred to it again, but it was his inheritance to me."

Like the thief in *The Gold Coin*, the teacher in *My Name Is María Isabél* goes through a change. María is an immigrant. When she enters school, her teacher shortens her name from María Isabel Salazar López to Mary López because there already are two Marías in the class. The girl becomes sad, and her name loss leads to other losses. She finally realizes how important her full name is and how the different parts of it connect her to her family — each of her first two names were from each of her grandmothers, and the last two were her father's and mother's surnames. She manages to communicate to the teacher how much she needs her full name back. The teacher comes to understand it, too.

Alma Flor Ada knows how much power resides in one's own name. For a time, at her first husband's request, she dropped the "Flor" (flower) from her name. Her grandmother, who had died when Alma was young and whom Alma loved greatly, had chosen the name for her.

Writing a story like *My Name Is María Isabél* represents another kind of power for Ada. "Writing gives you a lot of power because you can redress your life and change it any way you want." To students who want to write, she says, "All it takes is to get hold of a pencil and begin putting words on paper. Things you would never be able to do in reality, you can do with a pencil. It's a good way to get rid of anything you want to get rid of or create anything you want to create."

Interview by Lynn Landor

ARNOLD ADOFF 1935 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Black Is Brown Is Tan	2 - 6
Malcolm X	5 - 8
Sports Pages	2 - 8

C.O.S. Selections	
Birds	K - 4
The Cabbages Are Chasing the Rabbits	K - 4
Greens	K - 6
Flamboyan (prose)	K - 6
My Black Me: A Beginning Book of Black Poetry	K - 8
Eats: Poems	K - 8
Chocolate Dreams	K - 8
I Am the Running Girl	4 - 6
All the Colors of the Race	4 - 6

ARNOLD ADOFF is a 53-year-old poet. He's published 30 books in 20 years, negotiates contracts with publishers, teaches and travels all over the country, and, in general, spends a good part of his life conducting serious, adult business. But he insists he never will grow up all the way.

"I try to see the world as if I were eight or nine years old. I start every morning with peanut butter. I'm sitting at my desk and I'm sucking on some peanut butter from a tablespoon, and I'm becoming an eight-year-old boy or an 11-year-old girl. I actually become the people whose voices I present in my book."

One of his most recent books, *Eats*, is a thematic collection of poems about food. "In it are five of my own recipes. You can actually eat the poems — peanut butter batter bread, for example."

Born in the South Bronx, New York, Adoff started writing poetry at 11 and continued all through his school years. He studied history in college, did graduate work in American history at Columbia University and managed jazz musician Charlie Mingus. Though he never stopped writing his own verses, he became deeply interested in black poetry, and between 1968 and 1977 compiled seven poetry anthologies, four of them of black poets.

"The reason I've done so many anthologies is an attempt to bring black American literature to non-blacks as well as to blacks, so there will be some hope of people communicating on an equal level. I'm not interested in tolerance; I'm interested in absolute equality."

His concern for equality extends to the sexes, too. His poems in *Sports Pages*, published in 1986, are about track, soccer, baseball and football, but the players are girls as well as boys. He says he attempted "to go beyond their differences to their similarities and what was universal. What was similar was the thinking or the voice, the point of view, the voice of the kid playing as an individual in the middle of a team."

Adoff and his wife, Virginia Hamilton, a black writer, have two children. His 1973 book of his own works, *Black Is Brown Is Tan*, was the first picture book ever published about an interracial family. "I didn't know that until the book was published. I was just trying to tell a little bit, in a fictionalized way, about our family, but it turns out it was a pioneering book." Ten years later he wrote *All the Colors of the Race*, a continuation of his thinking in *Black Is Brown Is Tan*.

"I was lucky to be able to keep on thinking (about human races and mixtures, worldwide). That's something young people should realize — that when you have a thought you have to ride it like a horse, and you ride it as far as it will go, or you ride it like a car until it runs out of gas. Then you fill it up and ride it some more. You carry it as far as it will go, even if it's 10 years later. I didn't stop riding until I'd made another book out of it."

Many of Adoff's poems are shaped, literally, with spacing and "flushing," but all are shaped rhythmically. "My poems are not free verse; they're shaped so there'll be rhythm and music in there, as well as just saying. But that comes in the rewriting (where) I rework the words to be more precise and give more details and more images and all the other things that we do in poetry."

Adoff believes that poetry is the hidden part of American culture. "It's the part that's neglected. This is a crusade with me. If poetry is used by people every day the way they use anything else, if that'll help them grow and be strong and think better, then I've done my job. I want poetry to be as common as Twinkies or rabbits or people wanting to fly, or any of the subjects I work on. Nothing I work on is any longer, really, than the reach of my arm or my eyesight, with bifocals or without. Everything is all around me."

When you have a thought you have to ride it like a horse, and you ride it as far as it will go, or you ride it like a car until it runs out of gas . . . even if it's 10 years later.

Arnold Adoff

Another of his thematic collections of poems came directly from his daily walks near his home in Yellow Springs, Ohio. "I began to notice all the different green colors — green painted roof, green grass, dark green spruce trees in winter. I would make up little rhymes and little songs and phrases of poems in my head. I'd repeat them over and over again and walk very quickly to the bank. There, they'd think I was depositing or withdrawing money, but I really wasn't. I was grabbing those slips and scribbling down those words."

At home, he'd post the slips all over his desk and use them as rough notes to write poems. After almost two years, he had the manuscript for *Greens*, which was published in 1988.

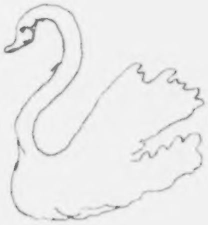
Adoff says the idea for *Greens* was "waiting for me in ambush." He wants young writers to understand that they don't have control over everything, but that wonderful, ordinary things are out there to write about. "Life is never colorless. Some people think what's important is on 'Entertainment Tonight' or in *People Magazine* or on MTV. But there's nothing more important than a big, fat red robin in a white winter setting."

Interview by Lynn Landor

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN 1805 - 1875

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
The Ugly Duckling	2 - 5
The Emperor's New Clothes	4 - 8
The Nightingale	4 - 8

C.O.S. Selections	
Thumbelina	K - 3
The Snow Queen	2 - 5



HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN used to say, "Life is the most wonderful fairy tale of all." When Andersen was a little boy, he lived with his father, a shoemaker, and his mother, a laundress. They were poor and lived in a little house in Odense, a small town on the island of Funen in Denmark. Two storks built a nest on the roof of their house and raised five baby storks there. To have storks live on your roof was considered good luck in Denmark.

Andersen went to several different schools as a little boy and suffered because he was teased by other children. Mostly he played at home alone, and on Sundays with his father. They played with a puppet theater his father made for him. From this play Andersen learned to love the theater. The most magical performance his father put on for him was "Aladdin and His Lamp" from *The Arabian Nights*. Andersen's mother worried that he didn't play with other children, but he used to say, "The children don't know how to play king and queen."

His head overflowed with stories. He had what he called his Kingdom behind a gooseberry bush near a high wooden fence and spread his mother's apron as a canopy over him. Through a hole in the fence he could see a garden with a lake and an island on the lake with a tree and a bird on it. One day he was looking through the hole in the fence and a black eye peered back at him. He heard a girl's voice saying, "Come in and I will show you something."

Andersen replied, "The hole is too small." They made it bigger by pulling off a piece of the fence. When he got through, he told the girl, whose name was Naomi, that he had made up a story about the lake in her garden and wanted to go to the lake. They ran down to it and saw a lily on the lake with a butterfly on it. "Look," he said, "on the lily is an elf."

Naomi responded, "You are making it up; there is no elf."

Andersen said, "You must believe there is an elf. I write stories about elves."

They played Prince and Princess together on the island.

When Andersen was 14 years old, his mother thought he should learn a trade. He longed to go to Copenhagen to try his luck at acting in the Royal Theater. Finally, having saved a little money running errands, he persuaded his mother to let him make the journey to Copenhagen by coach. Like a hero in a fairy story, he set out for Copenhagen carrying good omens — several letters of introduction given him by friends, one to a famous ballerina and another to one of the directors at the Royal Theater.

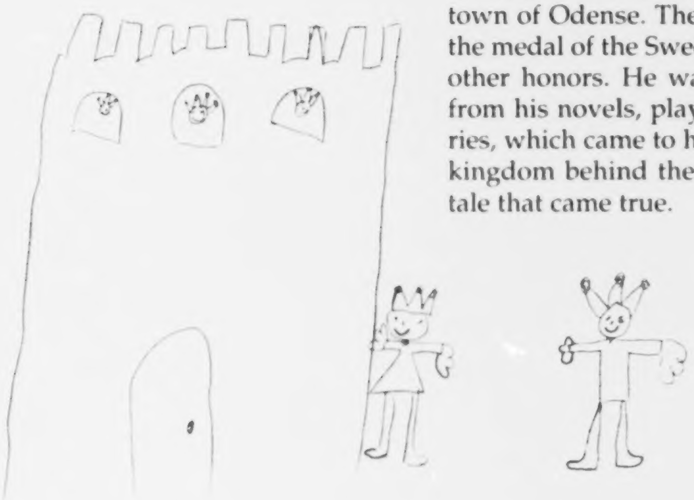
When he arrived in Copenhagen, his trials began. The director told Andersen he was too thin for the stage and that only educated people got hired. Despondent, he went to see a woman who had befriended him on the coach. The kind woman advised him to return home because he had little money left. But he refused to give up. He knew that heroes have to endure many hardships before they can succeed. And, like a true hero, he was experiencing many hardships. Again and again, he tried to get work at the Royal Theater as a singer, actor or dancer. Once he was given a small part as a dancer, but this did not last. To find work he could do was hard. Often lonely and hungry, he persisted writing plays that he sent to the Royal Theater in hope of getting one produced. One day a state chancellor and director of the Royal Theater recognized the spark of talent in a play Andersen had written. So that Andersen could get the education he needed, the director asked the King of Denmark to give him a grant to support his education. It was a joyous day for Andersen when he received the award money.

There were more trials. At the age of 17, Andersen went back to school. He had to start with 7-year-olds and show he could catch up with boys his own age. Learning Latin and Greek was difficult. He worked hard and got good grades, though one of his teachers was cruel to him and called him stupid. But, because he was befriended by the director of the Royal Theater and his family, he stuck it out at school. The director later helped him to leave the school where he was mistreated and hired a tutor for him. With the help of the tutor, Andersen conquered his trouble with Greek and Latin and passed his examinations.

Now his mind again overflowed with stories. People loved his first book about travel in Copenhagen. He continued to write plays, novels and poetry. He always enjoyed telling stories to children, and when he visited them in their homes he told them tales he had heard as a child and fairy stories he made up. The children were especially delighted with the stories he made up. He decided to write these down — *The Snow Maiden, The Tinderbox, Big Claus and Little Claus* and *The Princess and the Pea*. One of his most famous stories, *The Ugly Duckling*, is about him when he was a little boy. Many of his stories came from experiences in his own life.

When he was in his 80s, Andersen was honored in his home town of Odense. The king sent him a telegram and he was given the medal of the Swedish Order of the Knight of the Polar Star and other honors. He was greatly surprised that his fame came not from his novels, plays, poems and operas, but from his fairy stories, which came to him as naturally as when he was a child in his kingdom behind the gooseberry bush. His life really was a fairy tale that came true.

— Maria Jeffress



MOLLY BANG 1943 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Ten-Nine-Eight	K - 2
C.O. S. Selections	
The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher	K - 6
The Paper Crane	K - 6
Tye May and the Magic Brush	K - 6
Wiley and the Hairy Man	2 - 6
The Buried Moon and Other Stories	3 - 8
Gobblins Giggle and Other Stories	3 - 8
Dawn	4 - 8

AS A CHILD, Molly Bang loved to draw. Today, a published author and illustrator of 14 books, she admits, "I write so I can have a story to go with the pictures. I still really like to make pictures."

When Bang first started her career, she brought her illustrations to publishers without stories. They told her no one wrote stories that matched her illustrations, so she had to find her own texts. She turned to folk tales because she had read them all her life and because they were in the public domain.

Bang lived in Japan from 1965 to 1967. She was drawn by the country's art, which she felt combined a strength and gentleness not found in any other culture. "I wanted to see if I could learn it," she recalls. The first folk tales she illustrated were Japanese tales she translated.

One allure of folk tales for Bang is that they often depict transformations — people becoming animals, animals becoming people. In Western tales, people generally are enchanted, turn into animals and then are liberated, as in "The Frog Prince" or "East of the Sun and West of the Moon."

"But in all Oriental stories I know," Bang says, "the creature begins as a creature — a deer, bird, fish, fox — then becomes a human for a short time to give thanks or trick somebody, and at the end of the story must become a creature once again. One of the most famous Chinese stories is about a snake that falls in love with a human and becomes human because she loves him so much, but she is caught and trapped forever in her snake form at the end. I'd love to illustrate that story."

The gestation period for Bang's books varies enormously. It was 10 years from the time she first read the Chinese story from which *The Paper Crane* was adapted until the book was published. In between, she had made four totally different versions. The final version uses photographs of three-dimensional pictures, "like little diaramas" made from cut and folded paper. Of this departure from her usual style of detailed, drawn or painted illustrations, she says, "When I was seven or eight until I was 12 or 13, I loved making little pictures out of cut paper. Doing *Paper Crane* was like going back to that age once again."

One of the delights of Bang's art is the incredible detail on every page — the flowers in *Paper Crane,* for example. "One way the Chinese indicate the seasons, sometimes down to the exact month or week, is by the appearance of a certain flower. If you look at the flowers in *Paper Crane,* you can tell how much time has gone by because there are different flowers for different seasons."

The Paper Crane took years to complete, but *Ten-Nine-Eight,* Bang says, came out in about half an hour. When her daughter was four or five years old, Bang had to be away from her for two weeks. She missed her so much that she wrote a poem that her dad could read to her before she went to sleep. The poem, titled "Ten-Nine-Eight," was never intended to be a book at all.

Bang never knows how long it will take to finish her stories and illustrations: "Years can go by and it's in the back of your mind. You don't work on it all the time. But 10 years can go by easily before it's just right."

Researching an unfamiliar culture can expand the time it takes to make a book "just right," but Bang clearly loves the process. To prepare for illustrating "Wiley and the Hairy Man," a story written in Alabama during the Depression through the Writer's Project Administration, she traveled to Alabama, moved into a boarding house and rented a motorcycle. Every day, she rode into the woods around Montgomery where she would talk to the people. "They were very kind and helpful, and they showed me things I didn't know about that I needed to know in order to do the pictures. For instance, I didn't know what a hound dog was, what a bay tree was or how you got up to the loft by climbing up the side of the chimney."

Bang also has made books that come directly from her own life. *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher*, an illustrated story with no text, is filled with the environmental details from her Cape Cod home. The trees in the book are the trees near her home, as are the swamp and the blackberry bushes. The people in the story are fictional, though Bang's friends posed for them. "I felt that the people in *The Grey Lady* were a mixture of many cultures, a kind of universal family." She thinks the boy looks Hispanic, the girl Tibetan, the Grey Lady Russian, and the rest perhaps black.

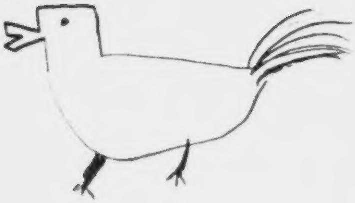
In this book, the mysterious Strawberry Snatcher pursues the Grey Lady, who is carrying a basket of the berries. In the end, she leads him to a patch of blackberries where she eludes him by walking onto a solid grey page. The Strawberry Snatcher is diverted by and then converted to blackberries. Talking about the genesis of this book, Bang told a group of third-graders in El Cerrito, California: "I much prefer blackberries to strawberries, so I sympathize a little more with the Strawberry Snatcher than with the Grey Lady."

Like the flowers of the seasons in *The Paper Crane*, the details in *The Grey Lady* are a story in themselves. On the next to last page of *The Grey Lady*, the assembled family is enjoying eating the strawberries she so carefully brought them. Hanging on the wall of the room is a large horseshoe crab with a forked tail. "My father was a scientist who worked with horseshoe crabs. The first summer we came here to Cape Cod, he found one with a forked tail. Now, they don't usually have forked tails, and that one was really special to him. When the house was being worked on, the crab got lost. So I sort of brought it back to him as a present by putting it in the book."

Also on the wall is a framed picture of a Hindu goddess named Durga. Durga was created when an evil creature named Mahisha was destroying the world. None of the gods alone was

When I was seven or eight until I was 12 or 13, I loved making little pictures out of cut paper. Doing Paper Crane *was like going back to that age once again.*

Molly Bang



able to kill him, so they all breathed out their powers, thus forming the 10-armed goddess Durga who killed Mahisha.

"The Grey Lady," Bang says, "was bigger and tougher than the Strawberry Snatcher. At any time she could have punched him and beaten him up like Durga did Mahisha. But the Grey Lady is more like the Buddha; she stopped the Strawberry Snatcher by eluding him and redirecting him, not by resorting to violence."

The Grey Lady, Bang also told the third-graders, reflects the fact that everything exists as a result of the existence of everything else. The philosophy is embodied in the Grey Lady, who is part fog, part shadow, part nothing. The objects around her actually define her shape, so she exists only by virtue of what surrounds her. Without those objects, she would be just a grey field.

"And that's the way all of us are," she said. "We don't exist all alone. We exist in relation to the people we react to and interact with."

Interview by Lynn Landor

BYRD BAYLOR 1924 -

Core and Extended Folklore	**Grades**
And It Is Still That Way	1 - 4
Poetry	
When Clay Sings	3 - 4
Nonfiction, Information	
The Desert Is Theirs	K - 3
The Way to Start a Day	2 - 6
Recreational and Motivational	
Folklore	
They Put on Masks	K - 5
Historical Fiction	
Hawk, I'm Your Brother	K - 3
Nonfiction, Information	
When the Clay Sings	K - 5
C.O.S. Selections	
We Walk in Sandy Places	K - 2
The Best Town in the World	K - 3
Your Own Best Secret Place	K - 4
Everybody Needs a Rock	K - 6

BORN IN SAN ANTONIO, Texas, Byrd Baylor now has homes in Arizona and New Mexico. She grew up in the deserts of America's Southwest. And that is where she feels most at home, in the southwestern desert "with (its) cliffs and mesas and rocks and open skies. . . comforted by desert storms." The desert and its secrets are what she writes about.

Living in the desert close to the Indians, she learned how they live in the dry, hot, rocky desert and admired the way they live in harmony with the desert without destroying it, using the sparse vegetation to live on, respectful of the desert animals, their habitats and the wonderful plants that live on so little rainfall. From this closeness and understanding of the Indians she wrote *The Desert Is Theirs*.

One time, after she went fossil hunting, Baylor wrote a story called *If You Are a Hunter of Fossils*. "It's also about the connection we feel to every other creature and every other time," she says.

She spent one whole summer listening to hills and corn fields and then wrote *The Other Way To Listen*. Another time, after she had picked up and looked at 1,000 beautiful rocks, she wrote *Everybody Needs a Rock*.

Byrd Baylor wanted to know how the desert animals lived and how they survived the dangers they faced. Like Beatrix Potter, she learned by carefully observing the animals and imagining what they might think and how they might feel. In her book, *Desert Voices*, the animals — pack rats, jack rabbits, spade foot toads, rattlesnakes, cactus wrens, buzzards, lizards and coyotes — tell us what it is like to live in the desert.

One day, Byrd Baylor stopped at the Papago Indian village of Topawa in that dry desert of southern Arizona where she lives. Someone had told her the Indian children in the school were writing down Papago Indian legends. She wanted to see the stories because she had never seen any written by children. She went into the school room and found tacked up on the wall a story about Rattlesnake with pictures on every page. The story was about how Rattlesnake made the first brush shelter so the people would have shade to protect them from the scorching sun. Baylor knew she wanted to make a book of this story written by children.

Taking the Rattlesnake legend with her, she decided to go to the reservation schools and talk with the children about her idea. Along the way, she camped at her favorite places and stopped at Indian ceremonials and dances. At the reservation schools she talked with the children about the Indian way of telling stories. They talked about how it felt to hear stories that weren't made up new and written down in books, that belonged to their very own tribe and were told and sung and chanted by their family and their clan. And they talked about how it felt to hear stories that had been remembered from the past by their ancestors. The stories were about animals who talked like people and about people who changed into stars or rocks. When these stories were first told, there were monsters and heroes and gods to teach the first people what they needed to know.

Baylor asked the children — Navajo, Hopi, Papago, Pima, Apache, Quechan, Cocopah — to choose their favorite story told to them by someone in their tribe. Some children offered to write, others to draw pictures. Baylor told the children these stories would be "their gift to other tribes, to other children. It would be sharing the oldest magic of the Indian world." So Baylor gathered the children's favorite stories and made them into a book. The names of the storytellers, and those who drew the pictures, are listed at the end of each story.

In Arizona, Indians don't tell their stories in summer because snakes don't like to hear them and sometimes they get angry and bite. So stories are told in winter when the snakes are asleep. "If you read these stories aloud in winter you will know that somewhere in Arizona your Indian sisters, your Indian brothers are hearing them, too," Baylor says. "Wherever they live, in some Navajo hogan or some Apache wickiup, a storyteller is speaking. On some high rocky Hopi mesa or down in the sandy Pima desert by a camp fire people sit close together listening still."

The book of legends told by Indian children is called *And It Is Still That Way.*

— Maria Jeffress

CLYDE ROBERT BULLA 1914 -

Core and Extended Contemporary	**Grades**
Shoeshine Girl	3 - 5
Realistic Fiction	
Grain of Wheat, Story of a Writer's Beginning (autobiographical)	K - 4
C.O.S. Selections	
Old Charlie	K - 1
My Friend the Monster	K - 3
The Ghost of Windy Hill	K - 3
Keep Running, Allen!	K - 4
Poor Boy, Rich Boy	3 - 6

CLYDE ROBERT BULLA was born on a farm near King City, Mo., on January 9, 1914. He lived with his parents and two older sisters and a brother in a 100-year-old house on the farm. One of his favorite pastimes was to sit on the front porch of his house with his dog, Carlo, and watch the storms that came out of the west. The sky would get dark, lightning would cross the sky, thunder would crash and the wind would blow rain onto Bulla and his dog. Bulla would put his arm around Carlo, who was afraid, and they would watch the storm together until Bulla's mother found them and brought them into the house.

In school, Bulla liked reading and writing and learning new words. He thought words were wonderful: When he wrote them down, he could make them say whatever he wanted; when he was reading, he could travel to a new place, meet new people, learn what they did and how they thought and felt. To Bulla, writing and reading were "a kind of magic." From the time he was in first grade he wanted to be a writer.

When he was 10 years old, he told his parents he was going to write books. His mother said, "Castles in the air."

One day, Bulla read in a Missouri newspaper about a contest for boys and girls — to write a story about a grain of wheat in 500 words or less. His story began like this:

"I am a grain a wheat. I grew in a field where the sun shone and the rain fell."

When he finished the story, he made a neat copy and mailed it without telling anyone. He waited and waited to find out what happened to his story. Finally, he read in the newspaper that he had won a $1 prize. Bulla shouted to his family, "I won!" His mother thought it was "nice." He could see in his father's face that he wasn't happy about the prize. His sister was sorry he had only won a dollar. But Bulla thought that wasn't what mattered. He had written his story, he had won a prize, his name was in the newspaper. He "was a writer."

Late in his life, after writing 50 books for children, Bulla wrote one more book about the years when he was a child and won that contest. The book is titled *A Grain of Wheat*.

Creating a story is a long process for Bulla. "I like to carry an idea in the back of my mind for a while," he says, "allowing it to develop in its own way and in its own time. When I've lived with my characters long enough to know them and their relationship to each other and have my story line well in mind, I'm ready to begin writing. I write first in long hand, slowly and painfully. The opening paragraph is the hardest; sometimes I write 50 or 60 before turning out the one I can use."

Bulla hopes children who read his books recognize that he understands them: "I remember what it's like to be a child."

— Maria Jeffress

EVE BUNTING 1928 -

Core and Extended Contemporary Realistic Fiction	**Grades**
The Happy Funeral	5 - 6
Someone Is Hiding on Alcatraz Island	5 - 6

C.O.S. Selections	
The Mother's Day Mice	K - 2
Winter's Coming	K - 3
Scary Scary Halloween	2 - 4
Ghost's Hour, Spook's Hour	3 - 6
Clancy's Coat	4 - 6
The Man Who Could Call Down Owls	4 - 6

"I THINK OF MYSELF as an Irish storyteller," says Eve Bunting, who came to America from Ireland in 1959. She and her husband now live in Pasadena, but when they first came to California, they lived in San Francisco in a house that overlooked the Bay. Every day she used to sit looking out of her window at Alcatraz Island, which at that time was a prison. Homesick for Ireland, she used to think of the prisoners far away from their homes.

"When I started to write, which was many years later, I still had that fascination with Alcatraz," she says. "I went up to San Francisco and stayed in a hotel for a week. Every day I took the boat over to Alcatraz (by then it was a state park), walked around the island and visited all the places that Danny visits in the book I wrote, *Someone Is Hiding on Alcatraz Island*. I love that book."

Bunting's first book was *The True Giants*, a story she says she'd always known because it is an Irish folk tale. Her writing career took off from there. Many of her stories come from her own or her children's experiences. She used to take the children to play on the carousel at the Santa Monica pier. "I found that there were private rooms up above the carousel, so I used that as the setting for *If I Asked You, Would You Stay?* The rooms are condemned, but they let me go up and sit in them, and I wrote the book sitting there."

Bunting had seen beached whales on the California beaches and watched as people poured water over them, trying to keep them alive. That became the seed of *A Gift for Lonnie*. "It's about a boy who finds a beached whale and helps save its life by keeping it wet until the tide comes in. The next day, walking along the beach, he sees a whale out in the water and then something rolls up at his feet. It's ambergris from the whale, Lonnie's 'gift.' "

One Mother's Day, Bunting's son gave her a song. "It was my favorite Mother's Day present. It became the jumping-off point for *The Mother's Day Mice*, though I changed my three children into three mice and changed the gifts." As with many of her stories, the background is real. "The rest is my imagination." A friend of Bunting's, a teacher, let her read essays written by her students, most of whom were from Vietnam and Cambodia. "I read those stories, and then I went to visit a class where there were only two children from Vietnam; I felt the other children didn't really understand them. I put the two experiences together and wrote *How Many Days to America?* "

Bunting clearly gets her story ideas from all kinds of sources, but she is selective. "I won't write anything unless I have a strong feeling about it. It has to move me very deeply, or excite me in some way, or touch me in some way before I'll spend the time writing. Everything I write comes from that basis. I call it the jolt. If I get a jolt of absolute fascination or some emotion, then I know the story is worth thinking about and planning and writing."

Interview by Maria Jeffress

ERIC CARLE 1929 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
1-2-3 to the Zoo	1st
Picture books	
The Very Busy Spider	K - 2
The Very Hungry Caterpillar	K - 2
The Tiny Seed	K - 2
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
Do You Want to Be My Friend?	K - 2
C.O.S. Selections	
A House for Hermit Crab	K - 2
The Mixed-Up Chameleon	K - 2

Small children are capable of an enormous range of feelings. I want children to know that learning can be fun, delightful, interesting, silly.

Eric Carle

"MY FIRST LOVE was drawing and painting," recalls Eric Carle of his childhood. Born in Syracuse, New York, he lived there until he was six. "There, I began school. I remember a sun-filled room, large sheets of paper, fat brushes, colorful paints." Then his family moved to Stuttgart, Germany. "This time there was a small room, a hard pencil, and a warning not to make a mistake."

Carle wasn't deterred. He studied graphic arts in art school in Stuttgart, worked as a graphic designer, as a poster artist and, after returning to the United States when he was 22, as a graphic artist in the promotion department of *The New York Times* and an art director for an advertising agency. In his mid-30s, he began free-lancing and was asked to illustrate some materials for an educational project. "The project seemed ill-conceived, and I told the editor so. 'Scientifically designed by educational experts,' I was told. But the child in me rebelled."

Carle was inspired by his next free-lance assignment — the illustration of Dr. Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* "The child in me could wholeheartedly embrace the fun and rhythm of this book. Now I began to develop my own ideas. How would I approach the child in me? I roughed out ideas and threw them into a cardboard box. I became hooked on developing ideas for picture books, and my interest in the advertising world waned."

His first children's book, *1-2-3 to the Zoo*, was published when he was almost 40. Today, he has written and illustrated 30 books, which have been translated into 15 languages. He describes his process for writing a book, using *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* as an example:

"I had playfully punched a hole into a stack of papers. I thought, 'a bookworm at work!' Not enough for a book, but nevertheless, a beginning. Then I put the idea away, looked at it later, loved it, hated it. I went back and forth with the idea. . . . Then one day, everything fell into place." In his illustrations, he constantly experiments with rich texture and shape.

Carle feels his books convey to children the possibilities of life. In *The Tiny Seed*, a single seed survives a hazardous journey to produce a giant flower and more tiny seeds, but the book teaches more than the principles of seed transmission and germination. It carries, he says, "an awesome message" about the extravagance of nature, the difficulty of survival and the promise of continuity. "I believe small children are capable of an enormous range of feelings." He also believes that education can grow from delight. "I want children to know that learning can be fun, delightful, interesting, silly. I attempt to incorporate these elements into my work in order to counter books that are 'scientifically designed by educational experts.' "

Among his own books, *Do You Want to Be My Friend* is his favorite. "Friendship is such an important element in growing up. We adults often forget this concept." Carle mentions a letter he received from a friend several months after he left Syracuse for Stuttgart: "Dear Eric, I would licke to see you SO BAD! Wen are you koming back again? Love, Your Friend."

"It's 50 years later, and I still have that letter. It is one of my most treasured possessions."

BEVERLY CLEARY 1916 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Dear Mr. Henshaw	5-6
Recreational and Motivational	
Henry and Beezus	3-5
Ramona the Pest	3-5
The Mouse and the Motorcycle	4-5
C.O.S. Selections	
Two Dog Biscuits	K-3
Beezus and Ramona	3-5
Ramona and Her Father	3-6
Ramona Forever	3-6
Ramona Quimby, Age 8	3-6
Ralph S. Mouse	4-6

> *I wanted to read funny stories about the sort of children I knew and I decided that some day when I grew up I would write them.*
>
> Beverly Cleary

LEARNING TO READ was a terrible experience for Beverly Cleary. Her first-grade class was divided into three reading and writing groups — the Bluebirds, mostly girls, the teacher's pets, who were clever and quick; the Redbirds, a mixed group with mediocre skills; and the Blackbirds, disgraced strugglers, all boys except for Cleary. "I wanted to read," Cleary said, "but somehow I could not. I wept at home while my puzzled mother tried to drill me on the dreaded work charts." Her distress was made worse by the fact that her mother, an intense advocate of books and reading who established the first library in their hometown of Yamhill, Oregon, kept insisting reading was fun.

By second grade, Cleary began reading, but she was bored by the stories in her reader. The "miracle" came sometime in the third grade, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, when she discovered *The Dutch Twins* by Lucy Fitch Perkins. "It was one of the most exciting days of my life. Shame and guilt dropped away from the ex-Blackbird who had at last taken wing. I could read and read with pleasure." The school librarian even suggested that Cleary, now an avid reader, might write children's books when she grew up.

Cleary's childhood boredom with many children's stories influenced her subject matter as an adult writer. "I had had enough of books about wealthy English children who had nannies and pony carts or books about poor children whose problems were solved by a long-lost rich relative turning up in the last chapter. I wanted to read funny stories about the sort of children I knew and I decided that someday when I grew up I would write them."

She didn't write them right away. For several years she was a children's librarian, and it was during Saturday story hours, telling folk and fairy tales, that she says she learned to write. In the late 1940s, she began *Henry Huggins*. Cleary believes that her experience as a Blackbird was the beginning of her sympathy for the problems of boys like Henry. "I began a story based on an incident that once amused me about two children who had to take their dog home on a streetcar during a heavy rain. This turned into a story about a boy who would be allowed to keep a stray dog if he could manage to take him home on a bus. When I finished that chapter I found I had ideas for another chapter and at the end of two months I had a whole book about Henry Huggins and his dog Ribsy."

As she wrote, Cleary discovered that she was writing for the child in herself — "a serious little girl, prone to colds, reading for hours, seeking laughter in the pages of books" — and also for her adult self. "We are collaborators who must agree. The feeling of being two ages at one time is delightful, one that surely must be a source of great pleasure to all writers of books enjoyed by children." Some of her works also are drawn from the experiences of her own children, a daughter and twin sons.

For Cleary, the most difficult part of writing is getting started — she says she chews pencils for a week, swivels in her chair a lot, stares out the window, looks for distractions everywhere. But once she gets going, she keeps going. If she reaches a trouble spot, she turns to something else for a while. And if the fun stops, she stops.

Her advice to people who want to write children's books is to ignore trends, which don't last, and just write good, strong books. "I also tell beginning writers to write as though talking to a child. An eight-year-old can understand anything you tell him. If a child doesn't understand something, he can ask his parent, or use a dictionary. But most of the time, he can figure it out from the context of the story."

Cleary's books have been published in several languages, and television programs based on Henry Huggins have appeared in Japan, Denmark and Sweden.

LUCILLE CLIFTON 1936 -

Recreational and Motivational	**Grades**
Everett Anderson's Nine-Month Long	K - 2
Amifika	1 - 3
Some of the Days of Everett Anderson	2 - 6

C.O. S. Selections	
Three Wishes	K - 3
Everett Anderson's Goodbye	K - 4
My Friend Jacob	K - 4
All Us Come Across the Water	K - 6
The Lucky Stone	K - 6
The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring	1 - 3
My Brother Fine With Me	1 - 4

LUCILLE CLIFTON is the author of 19 children's books and several books of poetry, and she is widely published in national magazines. She was born June 27, 1936, in Depew, New York, a steel town 12 miles from Buffalo. Her father worked in the mills, her mother at a laundry. She had a brother and two half-sisters, her father's offspring from a previous marriage and another relationship.

The family moved to Buffalo in the early 1940s and, in 1953, Lucille entered Howard University, a prestigious black university in Washington, D.C. She was the first in her family to graduate from high school and the first from her church congregation to attend college, after winning a full scholarship. Her grandmother nicknamed her Genius. She was a drama major but had to leave Howard University after two years, having lost her scholarship because she didn't study.

Back in Buffalo, she enrolled in a state teachers college and began writing poetry. She met Fred Clifton, a writer and philosophy teacher at the University of Buffalo. They married May 10, 1958, and eventually had six children. All the while, Lucille Clifton has written poetry.

Her first book, a volume of poems for adults entitled *Good Times*, was published in 1969. *The New York Times* selected it as one of the 10 best books published that year, and it won Clifton the prestigious Discovery Award from the YM-YWCA Poetry Center in New York City.

I have always wanted to affirm for children that being poor in material things has nothing to do with being poor in spirit or character.

Lucille Clifton

Interview: About writing

"All good artists' work comes out of their whole life, not just their thinking life but their feeling life, too. Good art comes from a balance between your thinking life and your feeling life. Even when you're little, you think something and you feel something. When you learn to write and can write it down, you might have something that is helpful to other people, or that is art or can be made into art."

Specific books

"*Some of the Days of Everett Anderson* is the first children's book I ever wrote. I have a friend named Maxine Kumen who also writes children's books and poetry for adults and she was talking about writing for children and I thought, 'Well, I'll try that.' My oldest son then was about 6, which is what Everett Anderson is. The first thing I thought of was, 'Being 6 is full of tricks,' and I just worked from there. I was surprised at how easily and quickly that book flowed and it just was based on things about my own son at the time. The name Everett Anderson came out of the blue."

Everett Anderson's Nine-Month Long: "I wanted to write about a child who lived in the projects. A lot of kids do live in housing projects. I lived in a housing project at one time when I was younger. An apartment house and a housing project are two different things. A lot of people who live in housing projects want to move to an apartment. Very few people in apartments want to move to a housing project. I wanted to write about a poor child and I have always wanted to affirm for children that being poor in material things has nothing to do with being poor in spirit or character. As a girl, I was very poor but I was not poor in spirit nor in character. And I wanted to affirm that for kids. That's where Everett Anderson came from.

"I'm not going to say that life is wretched if circumstance is wretched, because that's not true. So I take that responsibility to the truth, and to my art — when I talk about black families loving each other in spite of poverty, I'm talking about something I know. It's the truth as I see it.

"*The Nine-Month Long* was simply a natural evolution. People wanted more Everett Andersons and, with Christmas coming, I wanted to have a black nativity scene so I wrote one. Then Everett's mother got married again and I thought about how children feel when they have been an only child for a while. I do not have any children who have had that experience, but my mother remembered when I was little and my brother was born. She said

Fine!
How are you doing up there ann

she remembered me sitting in a rocking chair and all of a sudden I looked at her and said, 'What did you need that baby for?' And I thought about how kids do resent and how they try to figure out why in the world the new baby was necessary — so it was just a natural evolution in what Everett seemed to be going through at the time.

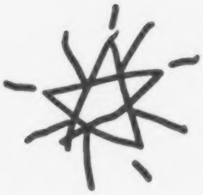
"I can tell you why *Amifika* was written. Amifika is a Swahili name and I have friends who had been wanting a child for a very long time and finally they were going to have a baby and when the baby was born they named him Amifika which means, 'He who was longed for has arrived.' I thought that was such a beautiful name and a child with that name would feel so loved that I wanted to name somebody Amifika. I like to give names; names are fascinating to me and I like to give names to people. There are manv children in schools with African names and I think they should see themselves in a book. I like to think that everybody should see him or herself somewhere reflected in a book.

"*My Brother Fine with Me* got started because I was at a party and a little girl named Johnetta came up to me and said, 'My name is Johnetta, put me in a book.' So, I said I'll try to do that. [Then] my son, my second son, at that time, for a while would try to run away. But what he would do is go down, we lived in a house almost next door to a mailbox, and he would go down and stand next to the mailbox. [I] could see him very clearly. After a while, he'd come back home and say, 'You can't run away if nobody notices.' He also would sometimes go in his room and push the dresser against the door so nobody could come in, and after an hour he would push it away and come down and say, 'I ran away again. I was missing and nobody cared.' I said, 'You weren't missing. You were right upstairs.' So that idea of running away and not running away came from that. His nickname is Baggy so I thought I would put Baggy in a book and Johnetta.

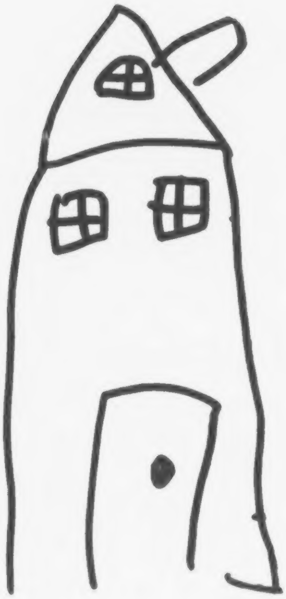
"And the language in that book. . . I wanted to have a very clear spoken language that these black children would speak."

The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring: "I write poems and I think about language a lot. In thinking about 'spring is just around the corner,' I mean, really, what does that mean? A child hearing that doesn't understand what I would understand. I thought, a child [may not] see the signs, the harbingers of spring that some people do and when you say 'spring is just around the corner' [the child] probably would think, 'I know where there's a corner, maybe I'll go around there and see about it.' I wanted to show that you can see spring, the signs of spring, even in the city. I also wanted to have a book where a child had a Muslim-sounding name, which he does, and there was an interracial friendship. I wanted that as well.

"*My Friend Jacob* is because I had a neighbor, and [she and] her son [were] very good friends of ours, and one day she was saying that she felt so badly about her son's godparents because she felt she had given them a defective child. And I thought, 'How can there be a defective child?' — especially her child. Everyone has some kind of strength, something that they do that's wonderful. Her child, for instance, knew cars and he could tell any kind of car and I can't ever tell a kind of car, don't know how to drive, so I don't know anything about cars. I thought he seemed strong to me in this area at least and I wanted to say something about the strength of everybody. Everybody has something and the experience of him knocking on the door was a direct thing that her boy did one day when we were trying to teach him to knock on the door.



"The only book that came from my childhood is *The Times They Used To Be. The Times They Used To Be* is almost directly from when I was a little girl in the late 1940s in Buffalo, N.Y. It's based on some of the things that happened in the year 1948. That one comes very directly in the names of the streets and the radio shows [and] the first time we saw television. I wanted to give the feeling — because you hear so much negative about growing up in what is called a ghetto — and I wanted to give something about the feeling, the family feeling and the closeness in growing up in the neighborhood in the 1940s."



The Lucky Stone: "[These are] stories my father used to tell me from when he was a boy and stories that were in the family and they really are almost literally transcribed. As a girl I used to hear the story about the woman in the cave and fingernails and things, and then he used to talk about the traveling shows in the South when I was little. I used to listen, just sit and listen to his stories all the time. He was a great storyteller and, fortunately, when I became an adult I remembered this and was able to write them down.

"Are any of my books special favorites? Let's see. I like *The Times They Used to Be* and I like *All Us Come Cross the Water* because it's had a rocky history. For a long time, people would say they couldn't read it because of the language. It's simply a book about people being more unified than not, and that's something that matters to me a lot so I'm very fond of it. I also think John Steptoe's illustrations are so wonderful; he's one of my favorite children's illustrators. He's quite something. I think *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is a wonderful book. I like *The Times They Used to Be* because my youth is in it. I was a little girl and it talks about when I got my first pair of wedgies and about the radio programs we used to listen to and the story involves a lot of things that happened. It's a story with a lot of love in it."

Interview by Lynn Landor

ROALD DAHL 1916 -

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	3 - 6
James and the Giant Peach	4 - 6
C.O.S. Selections	
The Witches	2 - 6
The Twits	2 - 6
Danny, the Champion of the World	3 - 6
The BFG	3 - 6
Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes	4 - 6

ROALD DAHL WAS BORN in Llandaff, near Cardiff, South Wales, the only boy in a family of six children. When he was two years old his family moved to a large house in the country near the village of Radyr. He remembered it as a tall house with turrets on the roof, lawns and terraces around it, and many acres of farm and woodland.

When Dahl was three, catastrophe struck the family. His seven-year-old sister died of appendicitis, and a few weeks later his father died of pneumonia. His mother, who had relatives in Norway ready to help, decided to stay in Wales. The family returned to live in the village of Llandaff, helped by their father's friend and partner.

At six, Dahl started kindergarten in the Elmstree School. As an adult, he couldn't remember much about school, except how hard it had been to tie his shoelaces, but he recalled vividly what happened on the way to school and back. Everything was exciting. He and his older sister raced to school on their new tricycles, speeding down the middle of their country road, taking corners on two wheels. In those days, cars were rare.

When he was seven, he went to the Llandaff Cathedral School, about a mile from his home. On the way to school and back, Dahl and his friends always stopped at the Llandaff Sweet Shop, which was "the very center of our lives." In the shop were big glass jars full of candies called Bull's Eyes, Gobstoppers, Tonsil Ticklers, Old Fashioned Humbugs, Liquorice Bootlaces, Sherbet Suckers, Glacier Mints and Acid Drops. Each boy got sixpence for pocket money every week, and when they had money they would troop in to buy a penny's worth of their favorite candy. Dahl's favorites were Sherbet Suckers and Liquorice Bootlaces.

Thwaites, one of the boys, told them they should never eat Liquorice Bootlaces because his father, a doctor, had told him they were made out of rat's blood, and if he ate them he would get ratitis. His teeth would become very sharp and pointed and a short stumpy tail would grow out of his back. There was no cure for ratitis. All the boys liked the story, but it didn't stop any of them, except Thwaites, from eating Liquorice Bootlaces.

The Sweet Shop had one drawback, the woman who owned it, Mrs. Pratchett. She never welcomed them or smiled. When she did speak, she would be apt to say, "I don't want you in 'ere just to look around! Either you forks out or you gets out!"

The boys wanted to play a trick on her, and Dahl had an idea for what he called the "Daring Mouse Plot." The boys were elated. At the shop, Thwaites said to Mrs. Pratchett, "One Sherbet Sucker, please." While her head was turned, Dahl lifted the lid of the Gobstopper jar and dropped in a dead mouse the boys had found. He put the lid back quietly. As soon as the boys were outside they ran, shouting, "It's done!" Dahl felt like a hero.

On the way to school the next day, Dahl and his friends were surprised to see a "Closed" sign on the Sweet Shop. They saw the Gobstopper jar smashed on the floor, the dead mouse lying there, and Gobstoppers everywhere. Mrs. Pratchett was not in the shop. The boys walked on to school feeling uneasy. Thwaites broke the silence. "If Mrs. Pratchett had gotten a big shock when she touched the dead mouse, she might have had a heart attack and died."

Dahl's heart almost stopped. It was his idea; he had put the dead mouse in the jar. Did he kill her? They heard the school bell. Right after prayers in the assembly hall, the headmaster announced that each grade in the school had to line up around the playground. Dahl expected to see policemen come out, grab him and put handcuffs on him. Suddenly, from a door that led from the school to the playground, the headmaster and Mrs. Pratchett walked out onto the playground. Dahl thanked the heavens that she was alive.

The headmaster and Mrs. Pratchett walked around the playground inspecting the boys. When they got to the younger boys, Mrs. Pratchett pointed a finger at Thwaites. "That's one of 'em," and she soon recognized the other four. Dahl and his friends were told to report to the headmaster. They had to line up and each was punished with four strikes of the cane on his bottom. Mrs. Pratchett was in the room watching.

When Dahl was having his bath at home his mother saw his bruises. When he told her what had happened, she left the children with their nanny and went right down to the school to the headmaster's quarters. She told him that in her country they don't beat children. She wouldn't allow it. She took Dahl out of the school at the term.

Dahl's mother then decided to send him to an English boarding school because his father had thought English schools were the best in the world. St. Peter's School in the town of Weston- Super-Mare, Somerset, was as near as possible to the family's home in Llandaff. One of the pleasant things about the school was traveling to it from Cardiff by paddle-steamer with his mother.

From his dormitory window at St. Peter's he could see the Bristol Channel and the city of Cardiff with Llandaff almost directly across the water from it. If he turned toward the window he would be facing home. He never went to sleep without facing his family and home. It made him feel close to them.

It was hard for a boy of nine to leave his mother, sisters and comfortable home to go to a big, cold boarding school where he was homesick, often hungry and was physically punished for even small violations of school rules. One of his cherished memories is of what staunch comrades small boys could be when one of their group was in trouble, or when they felt an injustice had been done.

Dahl was pleased that from the first week at St. Peter's he wrote his mother every week and that he got into the habit of writing her weekly wherever he was — from his next school, Rep-

ton, and when he got his first job in East Africa after leaving school, and then every week during World War II when he was flying in the Royal Air Force in Kenya, Iraq and Egypt. His mother kept all the letters for him — all 600 of them.

When he was 13, Dahl went to Repton, a famous public school. (In England, what we in America call private schools are called "public.") The best thing about Repton was that every now and then each boy in the school received a box of 12 chocolate bars of all different shapes and fillings. All the bars had numbers stamped in the chocolate. In the box there was also a sheet of paper for grading each chocolate bar from zero to 10 and for making comments.

Dahl was surprised to learn the chocolate companies took inventing new chocolates so seriously. He began to imagine a big, white laboratory with big, white pots of chocolate simmering on white stoves, with men and women in white coats mixing and tasting new flavors. He imagined himself working in this laboratory, inventing something so tasty that he had to dash out to Mr. Cadbury's office with his invention, and Mr. Cadbury saying, "This is a miracle." Thirty-five years later, Roald Dahl wrote *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

— Maria Jeffress

Sources: *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* and *Boy: Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl.

RICHARD GARCIA 1941 -

C.O.S. Selection	**Grades**
My Aunt Otilia's Spirits	K - 6

> *A story is a gift of love. It's one of the best things you can give because you reach inside yourself and find something and give it to somebody.*
>
> Richard Garcia

RICHARD GARCIA'S AUNT Otilia is dead, but to family members she's not completely gone. In fact, sometimes they speak to her just as if she were in the room.

Garcia grew up in a unique family. "The supernatural had a natural place in our life," he says. "Most of the time we ignored what may have been signs of the supernatural, but sometimes we felt that they meant something — an omen — as in the case of a dream. In our household we had a large and well-worn copy of an old dream book. This book was consulted in the morning if a dream seemed significant. Often the approaching death of a member of the family was announced by a strong smell of flowers in the house even though there were no flowers present."

Garcia likes to tell stories, especially stories he hasn't heard before. "My stories are improvised. There was a little kid who lived in my neighborhood named Brandon. Whenever he saw me he would say, 'Tell me a story.' One day he asked me to tell him a spooky story. I thought for a while and then I remembered my Aunt Otilia who had spirits wherever she went. When she was alive she was often accompanied by wall knockings and bed shakings at night. This was not considered unusual in my family, or even a cause for much concern. When asked about these strange noises, she would say, 'Well, it's only my spirits.' So I began to tell Brandon a story about my Aunt Otilia."

Working as a poet with school children has given Garcia many opportunities to tell about Aunt Otilia over and over again. Each time he tells it, it changes a little bit. In the 1970s, Harriet Rohmer, director of The Children's Book Press, wanted to publish a story with a specific cultural setting. Aunt Otilia's story was just what she was looking for. Garcia rewrote it several times, but the press ended up using the original version — word for word, exactly the story he had told to his neighbor, Brandon. The story was published in 1978 as *My Aunt Otilia's Spirits*.

"You know, it's kind of amazing how at first kids disbelieve the true part of the story. The fact that you have this relative who has spirits no one can explain — this surprises them. At first they're skeptical, and then they believe it. I don't try to explain it. But often the kids will begin remembering experiences in their own families that can't quite be explained."

Garcia was born in San Francisco. His mother is from Mexico and his father is from Puerto Rico. He grew up thinking of himself as a Mexican-American, but recently he began thinking of himself as "Mexi-Rican." Though he understood Spanish as a child, most of his friends in the neighborhood were Anglo and gradually he lost the ability to speak the language fluently. "Also, my parents were elderly and they didn't play with me very often. They already had had a whole family and I was 20 years behind. They didn't talk that much."

Garcia believes that in writing for children, you have to achieve a certain freshness that you can't get by laboring over your work; a part of you needs to become a child as you write. "A lot of the best things I've written for children, some of the poems, have a kind of freshness to them because of who I was when I wrote them."

A story is a gift of love, he feels. "It's one of the best things you can give because you reach inside yourself and find something and give it to somebody — a child you care about."

Interview by Lynn Landor

M.B. (BROOKE) GOFFSTEIN 1940 -

C.O.S. Selections	Grades
A Writer	K - 6
An Artist's Album	K - 6
Artists' Helpers Enjoy the Evenings	K - 6
Goldie the Dollmaker	K - 6
Natural History	K - 6
Our Prairie Home	K - 6

M.B. GOFFSTEIN'S *My Noah's Ark* traces the main character's life from age four to 94 and focuses on her affection for a toy ark her father carved for her. She plays with it as a child, shares it with her own children as an adult, and recalls all the love and skill it contains as an old woman.

"Books and toys ought to be so good that you can have them all your life," Goffstein says, "because although our bones lengthen and our skin stretches as we grow, we're all individual arks, and we carry whatever has been put into us from our birth until death. There's always room for more, and for change, but nothing can ever be removed."

Goffstein says her books aren't autobiographical — she was born and grew up in Minnesota, went to school in Vermont and now lives in New York City. "But my books come from my very deepest longings, and when I'm writing or illustrating a book, I'm living in that world. As an adult, I'm fulfilling longings I had as a child. As an adult, I study the subjects that were a mystery to me as a child, and when I have made them mine, when I understand them and can even add to them, I want to put them in books, to share them. The first thing I loved was books.

"These are some of the things I longed for: music; art; carving; photography; kindness to all living creatures; poetry; good, careful work from myself and others in every way — sewing, stacking groceries, shoe-repair — so we can truly be glad of each other; dolls; miniatures; china. And I believe in the life of inanimate objects.

"I love writing, because words are like little stones, each one different. You can pick them out. Every word has a different feeling, just the right one for the right place.

"Here's how I write: I fall in love with something, and I read about it and study it and think about it all the time. Everywhere I go, and whatever I do, it stays with me. When inspiration comes, when two lines come to me, I know I can write about the thing I love. You don't want to show off in a book. You don't want to call attention to yourself as author or illustrator, because that takes attention away from what the book is about."

Goffstein believes she has a responsibility to communicate her craft with her readers. That sense of responsibility, coupled with an offer of unselfish friendship, emerges in her stories. From *Goldie the Dollmaker*: "Once she had carved the head and body she could not lay it down on the worktable and go to bed. She felt responsible for the little wooden person who would not exist but for her, so she went through the wood basket until she found four sticks of wood that really looked as if they wanted to make arms and legs for the new doll." Goldie refuses the offer to meet a child who has one of the dolls she has made, saying, "It just doesn't seem right." Later, she buys an expensive lamp and dreams she meets the lamp's maker. He tells her he gave himself in making the lamp, and now that she has it they are friends, even though they'll never meet.

I like to think that children might grow up caring about something they read in one of my books.

M.B. (Brooke) Goffstein

The process of writing and illustrating are entirely different for Goffstein. She writes a story long before she illustrates it. "I like things to be solid, whole and round, so that nothing can break off. My stories may not be whole for many years. I care for them and serve them until I'm sure they're what they want to be." It may take several months for her to illustrate the story, but she does it without a break, "because the people on the pages are alive for me, and their whole world is being sustained."

Goffstein's careful craft and thoughtful subject matter make her books ring true emotionally to children. "I like to think that children might grow up caring about something they read in one of my books." She says, "I don't have children of my own, but I feel like all the children are my children. I want to leave everyone something good."

Interview by Lynn Landor

Portions of this biographical sketch are excerpted from "Goffstein and Friends" by George Shannon, *The Horn Book Magazine*, February 1983, and from "M.B. Goffstein: An Interview" by Sylvia and Kenneth Marantz, *The Horn Book Magazine*, November/December 1986.

EDITH THACHER HURD 1910 -

C.O.S. Selections	**Grades**
Hurry, Hurry	K - 3
What Whale? Where?	K - 3
The White Horse	K - 3
The Mother Owl	K - 3
The Mother Whale	K - 3
Sandpipers	K - 3
Johnny Lion's Book	K - 3
Johnny Lion's Bad Day	K - 3
Johnny Lion's Rubber Boots	K - 3
I Dance in My Red Pajamas	K - 4
The Day the Sun Danced	K - 4
The Black Dog Who Went Into the Woods	K - 4
Under the Lemon Tree	K - 4

All illustrated by Clement Hurd, except *Sandpipers* and *The White Horse*.

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LUCKY in having lovely places to work," says Edith Thacher Hurd. Her parents had a summer home in Cape Cod when she was a young woman writing her first book, *Hurry, Hurry*. As a grown woman with a family of her own — her late husband, illustrator Clement Hurd, and son Thacher Hurd, a writer and illustrator — there was the farm in Vermont, a rich source of stories for the whole family.

"*Little Dog Dreaming* was a true story about our dog. He lives in the city, and all day he sits on a sofa and dreams of this wonderful place he knows he will go to. The place is the country, and it's our house in Vermont, which we call the Peaceable Kingdom, the same name as my son and daughter-in-law's press. The book is about freedom, the freedom to move about as we feel and say what we feel, which I feel strongly about. And it's about my love for animals, particularly dogs." In the story, the little dog does get to the country, where he runs happily for days and days, but one night he encounters a skunk and tries to chase it, with disastrous results.

"Sometimes I read what I was writing to my son, Thacher, and he'd tell me what he thought of them. This time I said to him — he was about 12 — 'You think of a good ending and I'll put your name at the front of the book.' He came up with the idea of the skunk and how terrible it was, and that when the dog is finally home in the city he dreams of the house in the country and the moonlight, but he doesn't dream about the skunk." Thacher got his credit.

The Black Dog Who Went Into the Woods also came out of the Hurd family's experience, the mourning for the death of their dog, Patty. "My feelings of sadness really came out in this book," Edith Hurd says. "Patty was 14 years old. One day my husband went out into the woods to cut down a tree with his chain saw, and Patty went with him. Later, when he returned, I was about to go swimming in our little pond and I asked, 'Where's Patty?' because the dog always came with me. Clem said, 'Well, she left me early this morning. I think the chain saw bothered her.' That was the last we ever saw of her. I wrote the book about the loss of her and how each member of the family made peace with the loss."

The White Horse *is a story about the freedom you can have through your imaginary life.*

Edith Thacher Hurd

Animals and the outdoors and everyone's great need for freedom are the basis of most of Edith Hurd's stories. When her son was young, she taught at a school in San Francisco's Chinatown. "Children would come there directly from China, and everything was so different, they didn't know what was going on. They would begin to learn English, but the school atmosphere seemed to me to be so confining for these little ones, sitting at a desk all day long."

Her teaching experience there, plus a true story told to her by another teacher, were the inspiration for *The White Horse.* A young Chinese boy sits at his desk day after day. He feels caged. One day the teacher announces that the class is going on a field trip to the zoo. He's thrilled to be going on an outing, but when he gets to the zoo he sees the animals are caged, just as he felt he was. He follows the other children around the zoo and is attracted to one enclosure, where he sees a big, white horse. He feeds the horse grass, falls in love with the horse and doesn't want to leave him. (The story to this point is true — the real boy returned to his class and wrote about the horse, though in his story he fed the horse chopped candies from his lunch box.) In Hurd's story, the boy communes with the animal and suddenly finds himself on the horse's back, flying up into the sky. "It's a story about the freedom you can have through your imaginary life," Hurd says, "even if your circumstances are restricted."

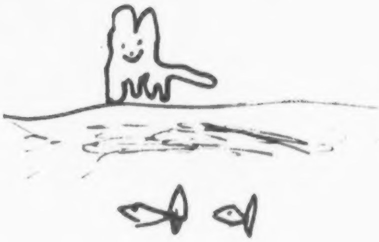
Hurd's own childhood was full of freedom. She grew up in a big house in the country outside Kansas City, Missouri. "I simply loved it. It was my whole life. My parents believed strongly in children having freedom, and the school I went to was very progressive. We were encouraged to have a lot of responsibility for ourselves and we did a lot of creative work — writing, painting, plays, music. At Cape Cod, we had a funny little old house and my mother encouraged us to just get up and entertain ourselves. My brother and I used to sail and swim. I loved swimming and imagining things under the water. I loved Cape Cod, the smell of the place was very important and so was the wind — we used to get tremendous winds." Those experiences later emerged in her stories.

Hurd's father also influenced her career as a writer. "He'd always wanted to be a writer, and he always wrote and talked about writing, but he didn't do it full time until he was older and retired. Books were terribly important in our family — they were all great readers. Father always said, 'It's the greatest profession you could have because all you need is a pencil and a pad of paper. You don't need a great painting studio and huge instruments. Just be happy with your pencil and pad of paper.' " She has been happy, writing 60 books during her career, many of them illustrated by her husband. Clement Hurd also illustrated some of Margaret Wise Brown's most popular books such as *Goodnight Moon* and *The Runaway Bunny.*

Edith Hurd's first book was based on one of her pampered students at a private school in New York City where she taught. The girl had a nurse who was always telling her to "hurry do this" and "hurry do that." Always hurrying, the character in her story gets into a lot of trouble and finally falls into a pot of glue.

"At the time," says Hurd, "I was in the Writers' Laboratory at Bank Street College of Education. Margaret Wise Brown was there and all sorts of wonderful people, and when my story was read aloud the whole class loved it. Margaret Wise Brown was an editor with William R. Scott, a young publishing firm, and she told Bill Scott about my story. We all worked on it a little more, and it became the first book I did."

Of her collaborations with her husband, Edith Hurd says they didn't really work together, though everyone thought they did. "I would get the idea for the story and then write it. Finally I would give it to him. He felt quite free to make suggestions, but I wasn't allowed to say anything — he hated if I made suggestions about his pictures, but I didn't care because if he thought it was good, it was all right. We never had great rows over it. I was interested in art, majored in it in college, but he had much more depth, more artistic feeling, than I did. He experimented with all kinds of art, and he had a quiet, gentle talent and a strong, even stubborn personality. I think we were very happy together. He was very appreciative of my writing, though he never gave me much encouragement. He never gushed. I always felt he was happy with it and liked it."

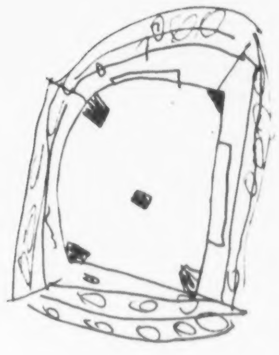


Hurd believes that writing often is a slow process, and that's good. She describes a recent trip to the Caribbean where she went on a turtle watch and an earlier trip to Maine where she saw a huge sea turtle that had been caught by fishermen: "I have a lot of material for a turtle story and I'm just waiting for it to pop out now. The easiest way to write is to sit and wait. You also have to write about things you love. If you have a dog, write about the dog and how you love him. If you see something at the seashore that's exciting, write about the beach. And don't ever be worried if it doesn't come out right away. You can never tell — and this is terribly true — it sits inside you and then all of a sudden it pops out. You're stored with ideas."

Interview by Lynn Landor

THACHER HURD 1949 -

C.O.S. Selections	**Grades**
A Night in the Swamp	K - 2
Axle the Freeway Cat	K - 3
Hobo Dog in the Ghost Town	K - 3
Mama Don't Allow	K - 3
Mystery on the Docks	K - 3
The Pea Patch Jig	K - 3



When I grew up, I wished that I had done something not allowed — my way of doing something about that was to write Mama Don't Allow.

Thacher Hurd

"I ALWAYS HAVE TO CREATE a sense of home in all my books — a sense of place. Everything starts from the cozy home. The character goes out and has an adventure, and then comes back to that home."

Until he was five, home for Thacher Hurd was North Ferrisburg, Vermont, where he lived in a big house by a river with his parents Edith Thacher Hurd and Clement Hurd. Both were well-known in the world of children's books — his mother as a writer and his father as an illustrator. In 1954, the Hurds moved to California. Thacher returned to Vermont for high school and later settled in Berkeley, where he still lives with his wife, Olivia, and their two sons, Manton and Nicholas. "But Vermont was always home to me," Thacher says, and the family still spends summers there.

When he was a child, Hurd loved to draw cars. He also had allergies, especially to cats. Years later, he wrote a book called *Axle the Freeway Cat* about a cat who drives a fast car. He's still allergic to cats, and his wife says that writing *Axle* was his way of having a cat and drawing cars, too.

He was terrified of the dark when he was little; it was mysterious and all kinds of things could hide in it. "When I grew up, I wanted to create creatures that came out of that darkness — nasty, scary creatures — that I could control in my books through my characters." In *Mystery on the Docks* Hurd created Ralph the rat who became a hero by catching the nasty rats that came off the dark ship.

Hurd spent hours as a child watching his father garden or paint in his studio. "I remember I was in awe of the way he could garden. It was incredible, he had such a natural ability. And in the studio he would show me how to do a lot of stuff, but he never said this is how you do it. He didn't direct me."

Hurd drew until he was seven, then quit until he was 19. "In between, I played baseball, played with my friends, read a lot. I was too close to my parents to do exactly what they did all the way through. It was a way of rebelling."

A lot of that rebellion comes out in Thacher Hurd's books. "I never felt I could be mischievous when I was a child. I always felt tremendously guilty when I made too much noise, and I didn't feel I had enough space to rebel. So when I thought of Baby Mouse in *Pea Patch Jig*, I found a lot of energy in that character. She's me before five years old. She doesn't go looking for mischief, she's just looking around. She's just kicking tomatoes — not at the other characters — and she's innocent, but she gets into trouble just like regular kids."

Mama Don't Allow also derives from Hurd's desire to kick up in ways he hadn't as a child. The title comes from a song he used to hear on the radio, though he admits he never bothered to find out just what Mama didn't allow in the song. "When I grew up, I decided that I wished I had done something not allowed — my way of doing something about that was to write a book about it."

Miles in *Mama Don't Allow* gets a saxophone for his birthday and right away plays too loud. When Hurd was 18 he was in a band called the New Tokaloma Swamp Band. "We were really a horrendous rock band. Just awful. But I loved the idea of being in a band. I wanted to be a rock star, but I couldn't keep time. Eventually, I had to quit. All my creatures in my books have adventures I wished I'd had, or still wish I could have."

Hurd's illustrations are bright and bold, like his characters. They are a departure from what he calls the "classical" technique he adopted when he took a degree in painting from California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. He did many precise, detailed still lifes and drew a lot of models. "I had a show of my paintings in Vermont and some really good friends came to it. I told them they could have any picture they wanted. They went through the entire show and said, 'We don't want any.' I was really crushed, but they said, 'You're just not in them. They're not you.' I realized all that *wasn't* me as soon as I started to do children's books. All of sudden, I felt like I could relax and let my hair down. I would write a very simple text, and as soon as I started drawing the pictures, I found that the text sparked a whole new way of working for me. I could do things in books that I'd been trying to do for years in my paintings."

He believes the story and the pictures have to go together. *Mama Don't Allow,* for example, is a very loud story, he says, and it needs very loud pictures. "I also think that bright colors make a lively book. Sometimes I feel too wild — I think I should be more conservative and do prettier pictures, but I never quite get to that point. Again, it's a kind of rebellion against a lot of stuff that goes on in children's books. For the kids I'm aiming at, I think there's a kind of life that has to be there first. It's more like cartooning."

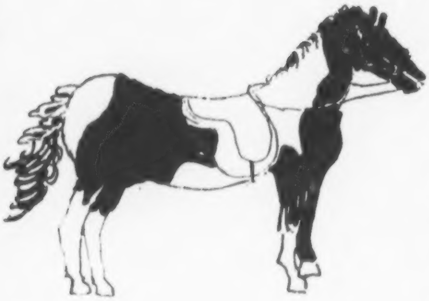
Hurd believes that in many ways, the books he creates are not really for children, but for himself, that they are simple and straightforward expressions of adventures and emotions he can understand. "If it happens that the things I do come out for an audience of three- to seven-year-olds — well, you don't do them just to do cute books for kids. You do them because that's where your artistic level is. When I do a book, it has a lot of meaning to me, a lot of emotional weight to it.

"I believe all people have their own way of finding a creative and wonderful joy in what they do."

Interview by Lynn Landor

MAVIS JUKES 1947 -

Core and Extended Contemporary and Realistic Fiction	**Grades**
Like Jake and Me	3 - 6
C.O.S. Selections	
Lights Around the Palm	K - 3
Blackberries in the Dark	3 - 6
No One Is Going to Nashville	4 - 6



Stories may come through me rather than from me. It's like dreaming, in a way.

Mavis Jukes

MAVIS JUKES was born in Nyack, N.Y., and grew up in New York City and Princeton, N.J. She now lives with her family on a small ranch in Northern California. She was an elementary school teacher and a lawyer before she began writing books for children.

Mavis Jukes is the author of *No One Is Going to Nashville, Like Jake and Me* (Newbery Honor Book), *Blackberries in the Dark, Lights Around the Palm,* and *Getting Even* (all published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York — and all edited by Frances Foster). Her stories, "Two Can Play The Same Game" and "Cross Your Fingers," are included in Marlo Thomas' anthology *Free To Be . . . A Family* (Bantam, New York). *Blackberries in the Dark* and *Like Jake and Me* were made into movies by Walt Disney Educational Productions.

No One Is Going to Nashville

"In 1979, a dog appeared on my doorstep. For reasons which I could never understand, the dog thought he was mine — or I was his. When I shouted, 'Go home!' he hurried down the stairs and found a washcloth that had fallen from my clothesline. He carried it in his teeth to a spot near our hedge and lay down on it, refusing to budge. I tried to ignore him. But, whenever I went outside, he would follow me — heeling beside me when I walked and sitting and panting beside me when I stopped walking. He was very protective; he growled and showed his teeth at everyone who tried to come near me — especially my husband, Bob. And he chased my own two dogs away.

"I put a number of ads in the newspaper, attempting to find the dog's true owner — but nobody answered. I wished I could have kept him — but it would have been impossible. I had a new baby, and besides my dogs, I had four cats and three sheep. And he would have made life miserable for Bob.

"In the process of finding a good home for the dog, I must admit that I fell in love with him — I was flattered by his loyalty and affection. Plus, he had the greatest ears. He could wiggle them in a way I'd never seen any dog wiggle ears before — they looked like two little fat flags waving on top of his head.

"I searched for some nice people to take him and eventually found a couple who lived on a fishing boat in Bodega Bay — but I hated to see him leave. Writing the book, *No One Is Going to Nashville*, was my way of holding on to him; it was my way of keeping the dog and still letting him go."

On writing

"Sometimes I'll start writing a story without having any idea where I'm going. After a while, I begin to notice that things are fitting in — like pieces in a puzzle — and I'm making a picture. But I don't know what it is. When I get to the end, it seems impossible that the story could have just come together coincidentally. It seems that I must have known the whole thing from the start.

"It makes me think that stories may come through me rather than from me — or that I have information I'm not conscious of that reveals itself through the writing process. It's like dreaming, in a way.

"Still, I know everything about the characters I make up — from what flavor of ice cream they like to what size underpants they wear. That's because they're all me, in disguise, or some part of me.

"Take Corky Newton, for example, in *Getting Even*. He's a bully and a dork who puts hair wads in people's sandwiches. Now, I'm not a bully — and I hope I'm not a dork, but I can tell you one thing: I'd booby trap my best friend's lunch in two seconds flat.

"My mother always told me my sense of humor would get me in trouble — but it hasn't. Yet."

Like Jake and Me

"For a while, communication between my stepson and me was difficult; he didn't want a stepmother, and he had a hard time accepting me.

"One evening, we went to the movies together. It was one of those old-timey movie theaters — it had a stage in front of the screen. Just as they dimmed the lights to start the show, I turned to my stepson and said, 'I'll give you five bucks if you go up on the stage and tap dance for the audience.'

"He looked at me for a minute; then he said, 'I'll do it if you do it.'

"We jumped up and hurried to the front of the theater; we raced up the steps onto the stage. He grabbed my hand and we did a wild dance together, with people shouting at us to get out of the way of the screen.

"The audience was not impressed, but I was elated. It was the first time my stepson and I had ever held hands together, and it was one of the most exhilarating moments of my life."

Blackberries in the Dark

"Once, a long time ago, I was at a mountain lake on a trout fishing trip. I was fishing at the inlet with my daughter, who was then about three years old. The fishing was fantastic!

"I hooked fish after fish, dragged them out of the water, smacked them over their heads with a rock to kill them and lay them at my feet on the granite. I was shouting to my husband, who was in a canoe, near the shoreline — catching nothing.

"I looked down to see my daughter looking up at me. In her hand, she was holding a beautiful, silver, shimmering, spotted, dead trout; I remember how it glimmered in the sunlight — I remember how she was holding it up, so sadly, for me to see.

"'Mom,' she said. 'Why are we doing this?' It was such a heartbreaking moment; I just stood there, like a dope."

On taking dictation (working as a COS parent volunteer)

"Sitting down at the typewriter at my daughter's school is pure pleasure for me. I love Children's Own Stories. The children yak and I type. It gives them a tremendous power over the language to have an adult operating a typewriter on command. It's as if somebody is handing them the keys to a Lamborghini and saying, 'Take this baby wherever you want.'

"The whole territory is theirs to explore: talking shrubs, frogs on fly-fishing expeditions, aliens, couch potatoes, nuclear war. They don't need to be able to spell or punctuate — just to imagine and communicate their ideas to someone. In the long-run, those are the writing skills that really count."

Self-interview by Mavis Jukes

EZRA JACK KEATS 1916 - 1983

Core and Extended	
The Snowy Day	K - 1
Folklore	
John Henry: An American Legend	2 - 5
C.O.S. Selections	
Whistle for Willie	K - 1
Peter's Chair	K - 1
Jennie's Hat	K - 2
My Dog Is Lost (Mi Perro Se Ha Perdido) Written with Pat Cherr	K - 2
A Letter to Amy	K - 3
Apt. 3	K - 3
Goggles	K - 3
Skates	K - 3
Louie	1 - 3
Hi, Cat!	2 - 5

EZRA JACK KEATS, who grew up during the Depression in a tough, inner-city neighborhood in Brooklyn, began drawing at a very young age. It was his mother who first gave value to his budding talent. One day, when he was about nine, he drew right on the enameled top of the kitchen table, covering it with pictures of villages and people of all races — the kids in his neighborhood and even American Indian and Chinese children, whom he had never seen. The drawings were so beautiful that his mother, instead of getting angry, covered the drawings with a tablecloth, which she proudly removed when neighbors came to visit.

Keats' parents, immigrants from Poland, had to struggle to make a living. His father, a waiter in a Greenwich Village restaurant, often saw artists who were barely getting by, if not starving. He wasn't pleased that his son wanted to be an artist, but secretly he was proud of his son's talent. Sometimes he showed his reluctant support by bringing home a tube of oil paint, telling his son that a starving artist had traded it for food. Years later, Keats found out his father saved up money to buy these tubes of paint.

Keats didn't use the paints until he was in high school because he didn't think he was a good enough artist. Instead, he saved them like precious treasures. After school he would unscrew their tops and enjoy the brilliant colors inside, then close them up and put them away carefully.

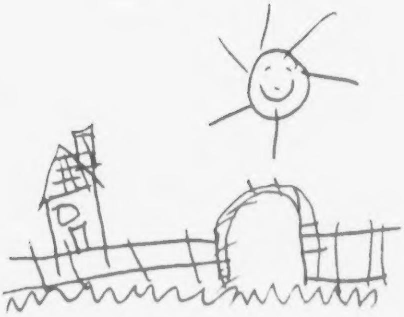
When he wasn't in school, Keats spent hours drawing and walking through his neighborhood. One day he discovered the Arlington Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library; there were books everywhere about everything, an amazing place for a boy whose parents could afford to buy few books. He was especially drawn to the library's art books, which he pored over, though he barely understood the words in them. Afterward, at home, he carved everything he could find — soap or wood — and would paint with anything, even Mercurochrome. A house painter who lived across the street gave him leftover materials to use. "I hadn't any idea of what was happening," Keats recalled. "I was learning and developing deep ties to the world of art through words I didn't understand and paintings I never saw."

Keats began to feel like a real artist in high school. He began using his precious oil paints, painting what he knew — his neighborhood, the children in the streets, the homeless people. One picture won him a scholarship to the Art Students' League, an art school, but he couldn't attend because he had to work to help support the family. For a while he was a muralist for the Works Project Administration, then had jobs helping to illustrate comic books and book covers.

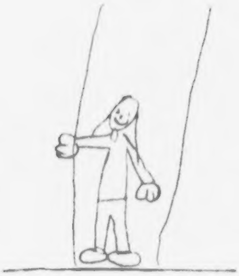
Best, Keats loved doing book illustrations and he wanted to write and illustrate his own books. He wanted to include all people in his books and wanted his stories to be about everyday, common experiences that children everywhere could relate to — the first snow, or bullies on the block. Much of Keats, work also illustrates beauty where others might not see it — in the inner-city, in the colors of crumbling plaster, graffiti on faded walls, broken-down apartments.

The hero of many of his 21 books is Peter, who is black, and his family and friends — *The Snowy Day, Whistle for Willie, Peter's Chair, A Letter to Amy* (which alludes to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.) and *Goggles*. Peter grows older in the books, and is a teen-ager in *Hi, Cat!*

The character of Peter began growing in Keats' mind years before he wrote *The Snowy Day*. "Long before I ever thought of doing children's books, while looking through a magazine, I came upon four candid photos of a little boy about three or four. His expressive face, his body attitudes, the very way he wore his clothes, totally captivated me." He clipped the photos, put them on his studio wall and over the years put them away, then took them out again, "offering me fresh pleasure at each encounter." Twenty-two years after he first saw the photos, the little boy inspired the creation of Peter.



It was in creating *The Snowy Day* that Keats found his unique illustration style, a combination of painting and collage. "The creative efforts of many people of many lands contributed to the materials in the book. Some of the papers used for the collage came from Japan, some from Italy, some from Sweden, many from our own country. The mother's dress is made of the kind of oilcloth used for lining cupboards. I made a big sheet of snow texture by rolling white paint over wet inks on paper and achieved the effect of snowflakes by cutting patterns out of gum erasers, dipping them into paint, and then stamping them onto the pages. The gray background for the pages where Peter goes to sleep was made by splattering India ink with a toothbrush."



Keats called himself the "choreographer" of his books. "I have a certain (visual) image of certain things happening, and then I hear the characters talking to each other, and the story grows in counterpoint," he said. "Sometimes my emphasis is on the pictures and sometimes on the story. The pictures do pace the book. I hang my illustrations on my studio wall in rows so that I can see them flow and move in sequence, like a ballet."

Sources: "Ezra Jack Keats: In Memoriam," by Selma G. Lanes, *The Horn Book*, September/October 1984; "Ezra Jack Keats, Author and Illustrator," by Florence B. Freedman, reprinted from *Elementary English*, January 1969; "Don't Let Your Children Grow Up Without Experiencing Keats!" by Sara Wagner, unpublished term paper; "Ezra Jack Keats Remembers: Discovering the Library," *Consumer's Handbook for Public Libraries*, 1977.

STEVEN KELLOGG 1941 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	
The Island of Skog	3 - 4
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
Pinkerton Behave!	K - 2
Folklore	
The Mysterious Tadpole	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
A Rose for Pinkerton	K - 3
Best Friends	K - 3
Much Bigger Than Martin	1 - 3
Ralph's Secret Weapon	1 - 3

"I HAVE LOVED picture books ever since I was a child, and I always found any kind of animal story irresistible," says Steven Kellogg. "I was an enthusiastic young artist as well, and I used to dream up stories and illustrate them for my younger sisters, Patti and Martha. We called the activity: Telling Stories on Paper. When it took place I would sit between them with a stack of paper in my lap and a pencil in my hand, rattling off tales and scribbling illustrations to accompany them, and passing the pictures first to one of the girls and then to the other. I enormously enjoyed these storytelling sessions."

Kellogg studied drawing throughout his schooling, and after he graduated from college and became a teacher he began submitting picture book ideas to various publishers.

"It was an exciting moment when the first acceptance came in, and I realized that I would be able to 'tell stories on paper' full time and to a much larger audience.

"During the time I've been working on the picture books, I've lived in an old farmhouse in the hills of Connecticut, which I've shared with my wife, Helen, and where I've raised six stepchildren, to whom most of my books are dedicated. Also in residence have been numerous dogs and cats, including my beloved harlequin great Dane named Pinkerton, whose stubborn unadaptability during puppyhood inspired the book *Pinkerton, Behave!* The heroine of the sequel, *A Rose for Pinkerton*, is our senior cat, Secondhand Rose, an independent old grouch who was born a wild thing in the Catskill Mountains, and who has devoted her long life to harassing everyone in the world, including Pinkerton.

"The ideas for the other books come from lots of different

The ideas for my books come from lots of different sources, but most of them have their roots in feelings and images that I retain from my own childhood.

Steven Kellogg

sources, but most of them have their roots in feelings and images that I retain from my own childhood.

"I try to blend the illustrations and the words so that each book is a feast for the eye and ear. I want the time that the reader shares with me and my work to be an enjoyable experience — one that will encourage a lifetime association with pictures, words and books."

Source: "Steven Kellogg Talks About Himself," Dial Books for Young Readers, a division of E.P. Dutton, Inc., New York.

ROBERT KRAUS 1925 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Leo the Late Bloomer	2 - 4
Recreational and Motivational	
Milton the Early Riser	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
Where Are You Going, Little Mouse	K - 1
Whose Mouse Are You?	K - 1
Herman the Helper	K - 2
How Spider Saved Halloween	K - 2
How Spider Saved Santabug	K - 2
The Trouble With Spider	K - 2
Three Friends	K - 3

"I AM A FLY. I have one friend, Ladybug, and one enemy, Spider." Fly is the narrator in Robert Kraus' *The Trouble With Spider,* published in 1962.

"We used to have a lot of flies in Milwaukee when I was a kid," Kraus says, "so I was very much aware of flies. We had a spider who lived in the back of my grandmother's house — we used to see him come out when he caught a fly on the web. And we had ladybugs in Milwaukee. In the summer time we had nothing to do as kids. I never went to camp, except for one day, so we were home and were supposed to amuse ourselves. My grandmother had a nice garden in the back where I used to look at the bugs."

Kraus says many of his books' characters and their dilemmas come from his childhood experiences: On Halloween, Spider can't find a costume, "a terrible anxiety for a little kid." Spider shares his lunch with Ladybug, who forgot to bring hers, just as Kraus at nine years old shared his lunch with "a cute blond girl." Spider feels rejected and has anxieties about wanting to be liked, as Kraus says he did as a child.

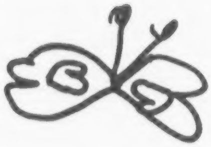
"My personality is expressed in both Spider and Fly. Fly is the angry, mean, grouchy side of me. But I always have an optimistic side, too, which is Spider. He conquers all his problems, gets Fly's grudging admiration and, at the end of the book, Ladybug always gives him a big kiss and says, 'You've done it again, Spider.' Spider is my wish fulfillment."

Kraus, both an author and an illustrator, began his art career at 10. "I did signs for a barbershop. It was my father's barber, so I think they worked out a deal. Anyway, I sold a sign for a dime. I had this talent for drawing, and I wanted to be popular, as any kid would."

His career as a cartoonist began when he was only 11 and had a cartoon published in the *Milwaukee Journal.* After studying at art schools in Milwaukee and New York, he sold his cartoons to magazines and was published frequently in *The New Yorker.* His first children's book, which he wrote and illustrated, was *Junior the Spoiled Cat,* published in 1955.

You can't write about something that isn't important to you.

Robert Kraus



Kraus currently is writing a book about Christmas, *How Spider Saved Santabug*. "It's a wonderful thrill to draw Santa Claus. As a kid I used to write him letters. The Christmas parade was a big thing in Milwaukee, like the Macy's parade in New York." For the new book, he looked at a lot of pictures of Santa and snow heavy on the roof with icicles hanging off. Santabug, by the way, looks like Santa Claus with antennae.

Writing and illustrating children's books is Kraus' life. "I write for myself. You can't write about something that isn't important to you. I write to amuse myself, and if I'm not amused — unless there's something funny happening in the picture — I don't get my little charge. So I have to add something, and suddenly the picture works."

Kraus doesn't like to analyze his work because he says it leads to writer's block. "And I usually don't do research. I feel the research has been done in my life, and I just draw up from my past impressions." The result, he hopes, is that "readers can bring their own feelings to the book. Apparently, they do. My editor says kids love the Spider books because they have a lot of anxieties." Spider resolves his anxieties by striving to make things all right, and when he does, he gets Ladybug's kiss.

Interview by Lynn Landor

LEO LIONNI 1910 -

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	
Alexander and the Wind-up Mouse	1 - 3
Foreign Language Books	
Nadarin (English title, *Swimmy*)	K - 3
Recreational and Motivational, Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	
Inch by Inch	K - 3
The Biggest House in the World	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
A Color of His Own	K - 3
Frederick	K - 3
I Want to Stay Here! I Want to Go There!	K - 3
It's Mine!	K - 3
Little Blue and Little Yellow	K - 3
Pezzettino	K - 3
Let's Make Rabbits: A Fable	K - 4

AS A CHILD in Holland, Leo Lionni lived with his parents in what is called a *bovenhuis* (upper house), the top floors of a four-story, two-family house. His home was in a pleasant neighborhood with wide sidewalks where Leo rolled marbles and spun tops with his playmates.

In this upper house he had a room of his own next to the attic. He was an only child and thought of his room as his "mountaintop castle." The room had two tables — an art table and a nature table, which he called his zoo and botany lab. There, with what he calls the "miraculous consent of my otherwise fastidious mother," he could bring what he loved from ponds, canals and beaches.

Leo Lionni now lives in Siena, Italy, and New York, but some things haven't changed.

"I collect a lot of stuff in my studio," he says. "There are all sorts of things, hundreds of things, things I bring back from the beach, that I find on the forest floor, that I find even in the center of New York City on the street. And whenever they interest me, have a nice shape and seem to mean something, I take them home and make them important by putting them on a little base."

Lionni says that after lunch he takes a nap in his studio. "Sometimes just before falling asleep or just after waking up, I lie there a little bit and things go through my mind more freely than when I'm in the middle of the day. One day I was lying in the studio and I don't know how my mind went, but suddenly I thought in terms of an animal, a mouse, and I thought of a story — there was a little mouse who used to collect pebbles ('cause I collect a lot of pebbles). His friend asks him, 'What do you want all those pebbles for?' And his answer was, 'Oh, you *never* know!' That really was the beginning of *Frederick*."

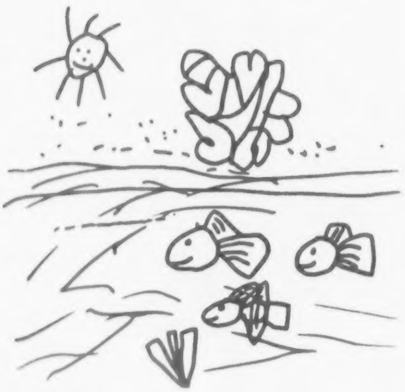
> *Usually I'm inspired by something real that I've seen. I was standing on a wharf and looking down I saw a lot of minnows — you know the way they swim together? — and they seemed to be in the shape of a big fish. That's how I thought of* Swimmy.
>
> Leo Lionni

Lionni has always loved nature. As a child, he watched seeds grow and caterpillars and tadpoles develop on his nature table. In little cages he observed the habits of burrowing mice and red-bellied salamanders. Containers held praying mantises and dragonflies. A pair of orange-beaked finches lived in a cage, and cans held worms for fish, frogs and birds.

He also had two big terrariums. He liked to say that Latin word terrarium — ter-ra-ri-úm. It sounded to him like "the last notes of a marching song." Within the glass walls of the terrarium he created make-believe islands of sand, moss, stones and tiny trees where small green snakes could coil. He made caves where frogs could hide. In a pond (an old frying pan lined with gravel) frogs and salamanders could wade. In the pond was a one-stone island from which tiny turtles could watch a struggling fly or a wriggling worm.

He bought some of these creatures at a little shop near his school, but most he collected on rowboat outings with his grandfather, father and uncle along canals and ponds on the outskirts of Amsterdam. He still remembers the reeds rustling in the wind and a tiny salamander's heart beating in his hand as he carefully put it in a box lined with moss and pierced with tiny air holes.

Lionni's uncle built his art table where he drew, carved and molded clay. When Leo was in grade school, art and nature were important subjects. In his first-grade classroom, a small kiln sat next to a box of clay covered with a damp cloth, ready to mold. Sometimes the children modeled mushrooms, which then were fired in the kiln until they were hard and ready to paint.



Lionni also liked to draw. He lived near two famous museums in Amsterdam — the Ryks and the Stedelyk. On Saturdays, while his friends played soccer, he walked to the museum with pencils, drawing board, sheets of paper and a small folding stool, and drew the sculptures there — a giant's foot, a gladiator's head, a nymph's wing. He says he learned to see and remember what he saw.

As an adult, illustrating his stories with a frog, a mouse or a fish like Swimmy, he remembers what he saw as a child in Amsterdam. "But usually," he says, "I'm sort of inspired by something real that I've seen. Once I was on one of the islands off the East Coast. I was standing on a wharf and looking down and I actually saw a lot of minnows — you know the way they swim together? — and they seemed to be in the shape of a big fish. That's how I thought of *Swimmy*."

Though the characters in Lionni's books are animals or little things, their concerns are human — the ordinary problems of people and how they are solved. One of his stories is called *Pezzettino,* which in Italian means "little piece." Pezzettino thinks of himself as a part of something big. When he discovers he is tiny, but himself, he shouts, "I am myself!" He realizes he doesn't have to be something big; he can enjoy being himself just the way he is.

"When you write," Lionni says, "you have to feel as if you *are* that thing or person. I would like to be *Swimmy* and I would like to be *Frederick.* I remember I read a book about Chinese art and it said that when a Chinese painter paints a tree, he becomes the tree. Painting or writing, you have to see it very much as if it were right there, and then you have to feel it as if you are the thing. Also, when I write for children, I see children in front of me asking questions. And I don't like to simplify my language just because I'm writing for children. If there's a word that is necessary for me, and children don't understand it, it's perfectly all right because there are a lot of words I don't understand either. But I think it's important for them to meet words they don't know so they can ask somebody, What does that mean?"

Interview by Lynn Landor

Sources: *Artis Natura Magistra* by Leo Lionni, and *Children's Literature Review.*

ARNOLD LOBEL 1933 - 1987

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Frog and Toad Are Friends	K - 3
Mouse Tales	K - 3
On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed Into Town	1 - 4
Gregory Griggs and Other Nursery Rhyme People	2 - 6
Fables	3 - 5
Recreational and Motivational	
Frog and Toad Together	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
Small Pig	K - 1
A Treeful of Pigs	K - 3
Days with Frog and Toad	K - 3
Frog and Toad All Year	K - 3
Grasshopper on the Road	K - 3
Owl at Home	K - 3
The Book of Pigericks: Pig Limericks	K - 4
Ming Lo Moves the Mountain	2 - 4

ARNOLD LOBEL graduated from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 1955 and, armed with a B.F.A., began looking for work as an illustrator. Fortunately, he refused to be discouraged by employment agencies that told him there was no money in that work — he went on to create more than 70 children's books in his 25-year career as a writer and illustrator.

Lobel, born in Los Angeles, was sent to Schenectady, New York, to be raised by his grandparents after his parents divorced. "I was not athletic," he said. "I was bookish and sort of isolated as child. As I grew up, I guess I did a very smart thing. I sort of escaped into my own fantasy world. I read books, drew pictures, and stayed in my room. It wasn't the healthiest thing to do psychologically, but it certainly led to my eventual career."

Images and events from Lobel's childhood play an important role in his books. He caught frogs and toads as a child — "I loved those creatures. They were the most beautiful things I had ever seen." Frog and Toad, two characters who have adventures and dialogues that Lobel said "were essentially me talking to myself," became the central characters in some of his most popular children's books. He intentionally made both characters males, both amphibians, so they are alike and different at the same time.

Lobel admitted that he was influenced by Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, but, he said, "My toad, a small adventurer like me, is just your normal everyday neurotic. He's all right. He's a little bit off the beam." *Frog and Toad Are Friends* won a Caldecott Honor award in 1971, and *Frog and Toad Together* was a 1973 Newbery Honor book.

Lobel loved movies and radio, especially films and programs that scared him. He recalled going to the Saturday movies to see Frankenstein or The Mummy and sitting in extreme discomfort rather than taking the terrifying walk up the aisle to the bathroom, or having to decide between listening to "The Shadow" on radio or sleeping that night.

He believed children should be "healthfully" terrified and encouraged what he called "cozy fear." In the Frog and Toad story "Shivers," he tried to show how delicious it was to be in a comfortable, safe place and yet be frightened. "Cozy fear is important for children. They can feel it when they are sitting in the arms of their parents and being read a story or while sitting in a comfortable theater watching something on the screen that is scary." Television, he felt, isn't really terrifying. "It's just violent, nauseating and shocking."

Lobel's strong black and-white illustrations also came from his old love of movies. He felt the selection of images, the way images are presented and the narrative of films taught him more about illustrating children's books than any other art form. Though he was proud that he had mastered pen-and-ink crosshatching, he said he always was dissatisfied with his work, which he felt was very flat. (Lobel had no depth perception.)

He knew children were curious about his creative process, but he also was uncomfortable appearing in front of them. So he had the idea of addressing his young audience through *The Book of Pigericks*, his 1983 book of verse based on his love of Edward Lear's limericks and illustrations for children. "I wanted to show children the whole process of how I make books. For this book, I made a prologue and an epilogue where I, pictured as a pig, am an artist sitting at a drawing table. I am creating this book, which is *Pigericks*, and at the end I am resting from this brainstorm of activity."

This biography is excerpted from *Language Arts*, Vol. 65, No. 5, September 1988.

EVE MERRIAM 1916 -

Core and Extended Poetry	**Grades**
Independent Voices	1 - 3
There Is No Rhyme for Silver	3 - 6

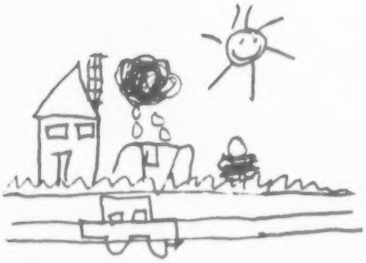
EVE MERRIAM grew up in a big family in Philadelphia. When she was quite young, she often was taken to see Gilbert & Sullivan musicals, and the lyrics of W.S. Gilbert were a strong influence on her poetry. She also was influenced by play time

C.O.S. Selections

What Can You Do With a Pocket?	K - 2
A Word or Two With You	K - 3
Blackberry Ink	K - 3
Unhurry Harry	1 - 3
A Sky Full of Poems	2 - 4
Fresh Paint	2 - 4
AB to ZOGG: A Lexicon for Science Fiction and Fantasy Readers	3 - 6

I draw on all five senses for sensory feeling (in my poems). Even when I eat a piece of fruit I like to feel the skin, I like to listen to the sound as you punch into an apple, I like to smell it, I like to look at it.

Eve Merriam



with her older brother: "He was a year and a half older. We used to recite light verse aloud and we got a big kick out of that. We would jump around and stomp up and down in the living room and laugh ourselves silly. I used to love that."

She started writing poetry when she was very young. Though she draws on past experiences in her writing, she believes that in poetry, everything is in the present. "I draw on all five senses for sensory feeling. Even when I eat a piece of fruit — apples are my favorite but I also like oranges — I like to feel the skin, I like to listen to the sound as you punch into an apple, I like to smell it, I like to look at it. So I try to use all my senses in everything."

Her themes come from her experiences and those of her parents and her two sons, one of them a commercial artist, the other a librarian. "I was a very slow person growing up, always the last one at the table, and I used to dawdle when I walked. So I wrote this book, *Unhurry Harry* (which is out of print), about a little boy who was slow because he was always looking and experiencing everything in a sensory way.

"There's a poem in *A Sky Full of Poems* called 'Umbilical' that relates to my older son. It's about his having a transistor radio that's attached to him. In *A Word or Two With You*, a poem called 'Two People' is about my mother and father being so different from each other. It winds up that, despite all their differences, they love one another and they love me. She likes mountains, he likes the sea; she likes to travel, he'd rather stay home — things like that."

Merriam's advice to children is to read out loud as much as possible. Read poems out loud, and "chat, jump, move your body around when you read them and have a lot of fun with words."

A Word or Two With You

"In this book I have a number of poems for group participation to get the children, particularly younger ones, to clap along with me and do little choruses with me. And some of the poems deal with experiences that I know the children have, like moving day. There's one that deals with television — it has a little chorus that goes:

Peanuts, popcorn, cotton flannel
Jump up, jump up, switch the channel

And at the end it goes:

Peanuts, popcorn, cotton flannelette
Jump up, jump up, turn off the set.

"Another poem, 'Secret Talk,' deals with being with a friend and being so close that you don't even have to talk. It's an experience that is very close to me and that I think a lot of children would recognize.

"And then there are some imaginative exercises. In one called 'Secret Hand,' you close your eyes and conjure up unusual things.

There's an exercise for teachers interested in writing called 'Portmanteaux,' and a long poem called 'What Is a Rhyme,' in which I explain what a rhyme is, and that's full of interesting, jolly, tongue-twisting things."

Blackberry Ink

"The title poem in *Blackberry Ink* is directly out of my own experience when I was young and went to the country in summer and picked berries, then looked at my tongue in the mirror and saw it had turned the color of the berries. Another poem in that collection is about a cat. I grew up with a cat and I like cats very much.

"I always used to get eager in the winter time for spring to come, so there's a poem that begins, 'Is it robin o'clock? Is it nearly time for spring?' A poem that is very, very personal in that collection is called 'Five Little Monsters' — they're stirring pudding with a wooden pudding spoon and the last, the fifth little monster, doesn't say anything but licks all the drippings from the wooden pudding spoon. I'm the fifth little monster. I was the youngest in my family, and I used to love to go into the kitchen when my mother was making pudding in this big, big yellow bowl. If anything dripped, I would catch the drippings because they were so sweet.

"And there's a poem in there about a little girl named Bella who had a new umbrella and she didn't want to use it because she liked it so much. That happened to me, too. I was given an umbrella — a beautiful, beautiful violet silk umbrella — for my birthday and I thought I just wanted to keep it and wouldn't use it. I was eight. I didn't want it to get wet! It might change color."

Fresh Paint

"In the title poem, 'Fresh Paint,' I tried to [present] new experiences and see things for the first time. I always have trouble with new shoes, I always wish somebody could break them in, so there's a little poem called 'New Shoes.' I remember the first time I got black Mary Janes, I went sliding all over and they felt so stiff. That poem describes the feeling of being in new shoes, that they feel like boats. It also describes a new suit, how a new suit feels when you're putting it on. It always seemed it was sort of crackly and it hadn't even come out of the box yet, it wasn't worn in.

"I love spring, so I have a poem in there called 'First Day of Spring,' in which it seems to me that a blade of grass is growing out of my forehead and I become a unicorn. And I love the number three. It's always been special to me; I have a whole series of little poems in *Fresh Paint* called 'A Throw of Threes.'

"I think three is wonderful. It's neither this thing nor the other thing, but it's kind of an amalgam of both. It's like in fairy tales, it wasn't the oldest or the middle one, but the youngest, and since I'm the youngest in the family, I think that appeals to me. I have

I was a very slow person growing up, always the last one at the table, and I used to dawdle when I walked. So I wrote this book, Unhurry Harry.

Eve Merriam

three places to hide a secret message, one of them inside a raisin in rice pudding. I used to love rice pudding.

"And I have a poem in *Fresh Paint* that describes peeling an orange. I really like to peel oranges. I have very strong fingernails. When I was growing up, for Thanksgiving dinner we always had a bowl of oranges on the table. No matter how much you ate, you always wanted to have an orange slice. I liked the fact that I could peel the oranges. That made me feel very grown up and important. So I wrote this poem about peeling an orange and what it feels like."

You Be Good and I'll Be Night

"I have a new book of poems called *You Be Good and I'll Be Night*. The title poem is:

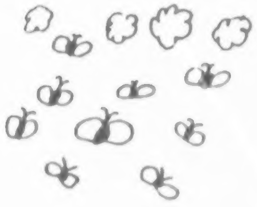
You be saucer, I'll be cup,
Pick me up, pick me up.
You be tree, I'll be pears,
Carry me, carry me up the stairs
You be good and I'll be night,
Tuck me in, tuck me in nice and tight.

"In *You Be Good and I'll Be Night* — the subtitle is Jump on the Bed Poems — there are other things that relate directly to my life. I love the seashore and I love to pick up stones. You know how, when the water has washed over stones, they're dark, but when you pick them up the color goes away? I wrote a poem about putting my own little stone in water and it shines dark as night without any light."

Interview by Lynn Landor

MIN PAEK 1950 -

C.O.S. Selection	**Grades**
Aekyung's Dream	K - 3



EVERY TIME the San Francisco elementary school teacher asked the class a question, the little girl raised her hand. Many other children were raising their hands, so she did the same. But she knew no English. She had no idea what the teacher was asking. She just wanted to be part of the group. When the teacher did call on her, everyone turned to look at her, but she just turned bright red. The teacher ignored her, and called on someone else. Observing the class and the girl's embarrassment was Min Paek. The year was 1975.

"I had only been in the United States three years myself and was struggling with the language," says Paek. "I was working at the Korean Community Service Center and was a teacher's aide, called to the schools a lot to help with Korean boys and girls who the schools thought were emotionally disturbed. In fact, they weren't. They were just normal kids with little English skills who were having trouble adjusting to the environment. That little girl

— it really hit my heart. She probably had just come here. You could see it right away. I felt, 'Something's got to be done about this.' I wrote in my diary that day about what had happened."

That experience became *Aekyung's Dream*, which Paek wrote and illustrated, and which was published by Children's Book Press. In the story, Aekyung , a young girl who has been in America only six months and barely speaks English, gets up in the morning and hears the birds singing. She is having so much trouble adjusting to her new home that she thinks even the birds sing in English. At school, the other children call her "Chinese" and tease her about her "Chinese eyes."

One night she dreams of King Sejong, a good and wise 16th century king who invented the Korean alphabet. He reminds her of the most important part of a book he wrote: "My dear child, you must be strong like a tree with deep roots. In this way the cruel winds will not shake you and your life will blossom like a Mukung hwa." (Hwa means flower, and Mukung hwa is the national flower of Korea.)

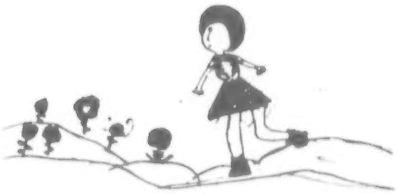
The dream affects Aekyung, and she begins studying hard instead of crying. One day in class, she does a portrait of King Sejong that draws the admiration of her fellow students. Her art and its expression of her Korean roots give her confidence to communicate with her peers. The story ends with Aekyung listening to the birds singing in Korean, then English, then English and Korean. Happily, she says hello to them in English and Korean.

I always wondered what the relationship was between being an artist and my community and the society I live in.

Min Paek

"This book just came out," Paek says. "I've studied art for a long time, and I always wondered what the relationship was between being an artist and my community and the society I live in. I was having problems really expressing myself because I didn't have self-confidence. When I did the book, it all came out. The process was wonderful."

Paek now makes her living as a commercial artist, creating community-oriented posters, brochures and catalogues. She credits her parents with her love of art — her mother taught her to draw and her father, a professor in Korea, encouraged her when she was a child. However, when she got older, she and her father disagreed about her career plans. "It sort of became my fantasy, being an artist and wearing a beret. I wanted to go to Paris. My father and I had a big fight when I was entering college because he didn't want me to study art. But I was strong enough to do whatever I wanted to do."



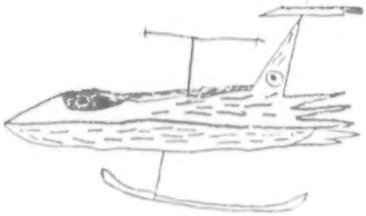
When Paek and her family left Korea, they gave away everything. "We came here with nothing — all we had was our Korean heritage." But, like Aekyung, she has come to realize that her Korean identity, her roots, are strong. She does not consider herself a professional writer, though she does plan to write more stories.

"Right now, I'm concentrating on Korean women artists' issues because they all have similar experiences to mine. Art is a funny thing — it's not like you get a job as an accountant or lawyer. There are many problems we need to deal with within ourselves, as well as outside. Do people care about Korean women artists? Politically, it's a long process we're working on, and I believe we need to work together. What's most important is not being bothered by obstacles, but doing your homework and not forgetting about yourself and who you are."

Interview by Lynn Landor

BILL PEET 1915 -

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
Big Bad Bruce	K - 3
Recreational and Motivational	
Chester the Worldly Pig	2 - 4
Huge Harold	3 - 5
C.O.S. Selections	
No Such Things	K - 3
Zella, Zack and Zodiak	K - 3
The Kweeks of Kookatoombee	2 - 4
The Whingdingdilly	2 - 4
The Gnats of Knotty Pine	2 - 5
Bill Peet: An Autobiography Teacher resource	



BILL PEET was born on January 29, 1915, in Grandview, Indiana, a small town on the banks of the Ohio River. "All I remember of Grandview," he says, "are the two pigs we raised in our back yard, one dull white, and the other rusty red." When Peet was three, his family moved to Indianapolis.

"Looking back on those early days in Indianapolis, I realize that it was a good place for a boy to spend his childhood. Until I was 12 we lived near the edge of the city, a half-hour hike from the open countryside, with its small creeks winding through rolling hills. My grandfather's rustic old farm was even more spectacular than the countryside around Indianapolis, for the land that was not planted in corn and wheat was a thriving wilderness. The dark woods swarmed with squirrels, chipmunks, weasels, opossums, and raccoons."

Drawing was his main hobby from the time he was old enough to hold a crayon, and he drew everything that came to mind: animals, trains, fire engines, racing cars, airplanes, gladiators, World War I battles, Revolutionary War battles, football games, prize fights.

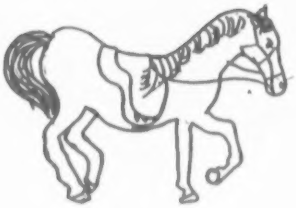
Peet recalls that his art class in grammar school wasn't enough for him, and his drawing crept into other classes. "I always kept a small tablet in my desk and at every chance I would sneak a drawing into it. One particular teacher snatched my tablet away just as the others had done and marched to the front of the room with it. But then, turning to the class, she said, 'I want you to see what William has been doing!' With an amused smile the teacher turned the pages for all to see. After returning the tablet she encouraged me, saying, 'I hope you will do something with your drawing someday.' I *did* have hopes of doing something with it; in those days my secret ambition was to be an illustrator of animal stories. Yet, it was hard to believe that drawing could ever be practical as a career. It was too much fun."

He was awarded a scholarship to the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis where he studied drawing, painting, and design. In 1937, he heard that Walt Disney needed artists for animated films, so Peet moved to California. At Disney's he became a sketch artist, planning screen stories.

He married Margaret, whom he had met in art school. "When my two sons, Bill and Steve, were very small I would make up bedtime stories for them almost every night. With so much storytelling practice I began to contribute more to the Disney stories, but always with illustrations. Finally, I became Walt's top writer-illustrator on his animated features. It was much more of a job than I had bargained for, yet I enjoyed the creative freedom."

After 27 years, he left Disney's to write and illustrate story books. His first book, *Hubert's Hair-Raising Adventure*, was published in 1959. Since then, he has written and illustrated 34 books and all but two are fantasies. *The Whingdingdilly*, for example, came out of a guessing game he used when he visited schools to talk with children and draw pictures for them.

"I made animal drawings on an oversized sketch pad so everyone could watch. As soon as I started a drawing, the kids would all try to guess what it might be. I liked to keep them guessing as long as possible by putting off drawing the most recognizable parts of the animal until the last minute. But I could never fool them for long, especially when it came to elephants. Even if I started with just a foot and a few toenails, someone in the group would whisper 'Elephant' and the guessing game was over."



Then, he says, he resorted to trickery — after starting a drawing of an animal the children were sure to recognize, he'd switch to a different one. "There were shouts of 'Not fair! Not fair! That's cheating!' But their protests were always in fun, and as I continued to add odd parts, the kids would laugh all the way. And laughter of children is beautiful music. Since the creatures I drew were so funny to the kids, I decided one belonged in a storybook — a story about an old farm dog named Scamp, and the hodge-podge of an animal finally became the Whingdingdilly."

Peet generally does about one book a year. His process is to do a lot of sketching along with the writing, as he did in *Huge Harold*. "I just drew a large rabbit and then tried to figure out what his problems would be — you know, living out in farm country where he'd be easily discovered, where he couldn't hide in the weeds and logs." But other times he creates a problem for the character and then goes from there. "You get him in trouble and then get him out. There are various ways to approach the stories, but I always test them for their pictorial possibilities as I write them."

One thing I tell kids is to play around with ideas and enjoy. Make it fun. Don't get tied up in trying to get something done, because pressure destroys creativity.

Bill Peet

Peet says he "messes around with ideas" every day. He estimates that in his life he's made hundreds of thousands of drawings and written a few hundred thousand words. He does it because he has to. "It's a compulsion. You want to do it. You love it. You have to discover how creative you are, and the only way to do that is by yourself. There's no right or wrong in creative work, no wrong way to write a story. There are so *many* ways."

His books don't just appear. "I don't want to discourage kids, and yet I don't want to give them false encouragement. You don't just sit down in the morning and say, 'Hey, today I write a book!' I start stories and sometimes quit them and get other ideas. I go round and round and sometimes go for long stretches of time and have to back away and just take another look at them."

When children ask him how he thinks of ideas for his stories he has no easy answers. "One thing I tell kids is to play around with ideas and enjoy. Make it fun. Don't get tied up in trying to get something done, because pressure destroys creativity. If they don't love it, you see, they shouldn't be doing it, because they won't succeed if they don't love it."

Interview by Lynn Landor

Portions of this sketch were excerpted from a brochure about the author, "Bill Peet and how he grew — from a boy into your favorite author," published by Houghton Mifflin.

LEO POLITI 1908 -

Core and Extended Picture Books	**Grades**
The Nicest Gift	K - 12
Milko's Gift	1 - 3
Contemporary Realistic Fiction	
Song of the Swallows	1 - 5
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
Pedro, the Angel of Olvera Street	2 - 4
Contemporary Realistic Fiction	
Three Stalks of Corn	K - 2
C.O.S. Selections	
Juanita	K - 3
Little Leo	K - 3
Mieko	K - 3
Rosa	K - 3

LEO POLITI was born on a ranch near Fresno, California, and spent his early years there. When he was seven, his family moved to his mother's birthplace in northern Italy. At 15, he was awarded money to study drawing, sculpture, architecture and design at the National Art Institute near Milan.

When he returned to the United States at 22, he lived in the Mexican section of Los Angeles. It was hard for a young artist to earn a living. He did all kinds of work, including painting murals and, at night, drawing pictures of tourists as they walked along the street where he lived.

He got started as an author and illustrator of children's books when he did a drawing of his friend, Pedro, with angel's wings as a Christmas card, and sent it to the children's book editor for publisher Charles Scribner's Sons. The editor suggested that Leo write a whole book about Pedro, and he did, entitling it *Pedro, the Angel of Olvera Street*. (Leo and Pedro lived on Olvera Street.) The book was published and selected as a Caldecott honor book. From then on, Leo Politi wrote about the children of Olvera Street — Mexican, Japanese, Chinese and other American children.

Other books by Leo Politi:

Moy Moy, a story about Chinese children.

Three Stalks of Corn, a story about two Tarahumaras Indian children who save three stalks of corn after a flood.

Song of the Swallows, a story about the swallows that come every spring to the mission gardens of San Juan Capistrano.

Leo Politi says that in his books he tries to emphasize "a love for people, animals and flowers." He hopes all children will enjoy creating things — stories, drawing, working with clay and wood.

— Maria Jeffress

Source: "Leo Politi," a brochure about the author, Charles Scribner's Sons.

BEATRIX POTTER 1866 - 1943

Core and Extended Picture Books	**Grades**
The Tale of Peter Rabbit	K - 2
C.O.S. Selections	
Ginger and Pickles	K - 2
The Tale of Benjamin Bunny	K - 2
The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck	K - 2
The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse	K - 2
The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fischer	K - 2
The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle	K - 2
The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin	K - 2

BEATRIX POTTER, world famous as an author and illustrator of children's stories, as a child was terribly lonely. Born in London in a big house called Bolton Gardens, Beatrix was raised by governesses. She didn't see much of her parents, and she had no friends. Her playthings were three dolls, a cotton-stuffed pig and six books.

Her first playmate was her brother Bertram, born when Beatrix was six. They played together during Bertram's early years — until he was sent away to school. Beatrix did not go away to school; she was taught at home by governesses until her early teens, thus adding to her isolation.

Books were Beatrix's friends, especially *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the poems of Edward Lear, *Uncle Remus*, and Sir Walter Scott's stories of medieval England.

She also liked to draw and to paint, and was encouraged in this interest by her governesses and her father, who used to take her to Royal Academy painting exhibitions at the South Kensington Museum and the Natural History Museum when she was a teen-ager. She had drawing lessons until she was 17, and especially enjoyed drawing fossils.

It was in the country in Scotland where the Potter family often spent summers that Bertram and Beatrix were happiest. There they were free to explore the forests and fields around the farmhouses. Flowers grew in the green fields and farm yards, and along the hedges and in the woods were little animals — field mice, hedgehogs, rabbits and squirrels. Beatrix used to sit behind the tall grass and observe the family lives of these beautiful animals who were like little people living their busy lives in burrows, holes, hedges and ditches — just as people live in their houses.

In her stories, Potter tells how these animals lived as she imagined it, observing them from behind the tall grass. Though she dressed up these furry animals like people, she tried to describe their actions and fears as animals, always having to watch out for the dangers around them — Mr. McGregor, Mr. Tod (the fox), Samuel Whickers and Ginger the cat.

In *Ginger and Pickles*, she portrayed Ginger the cat behind the counter of his shop where the mice did their shopping, telling Pickles the clerk to serve them because he said they made his mouth water. "I cannot bear," Ginger said, "to see them going out at the door carrying their little parcels." In *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*, she had squirrels gather nuts into tiny sacks and cross a river using their tails as sails.

As a child, Potter always had pet animals that lived in her room: A rabbit, who became known as Peter; a hedgehog, Mr. Tiggy; two mice that she had rescued from the kitchen, tamed and named Tom Thumb and Hunka Munca, and featured them in *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*.

Potter became very fond of a little boy named Noel, the son of one of her governesses. They both were interested in animals and how they lived. Noel lived far from Beatrix and she couldn't visit him often so she used to write him letters that she illustrated with drawings. She would give him news of what Peter Rabbit and she were doing. When nothing much was happening, she made up stories to tell Noel. One of her letters to Noel began this way:

My dear Noel,

I don't know what to write you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits, whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter.

They lived with their mother in a sand bank under the root of a big fir tree.

"Now my dears," said old Mrs. Bunny, "you may go into the field or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden. . ."

This became *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* , which has been translated into 15 languages, including Latin, Japanese and Icelandic, since it was published in 1901.

After *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published, book sales were such that Potter made enough money to buy a little farm in the country where she and Bertram used to explore "real life." Her farm was called Hilltop. The farm can be seen exactly as it was when Potter lived there in the pictures she drew in her book *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*. You also could go to England and visit Hilltop Farm in the village of Sawrey in the Lake District — and see it just as it was because it's being preserved by the National Trust to which Potter and her husband willed the farm.

Though Potter is remembered most for her children's stories, she also was a successful farmer and a celebrated conservationist who produced many naturalist studies and scientific papers.

— Maria Jeffress

Sources: *The Tale of Beatrix Potter* by Margaret Lane and *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature.*

MARY ROBINSON 1939 -

C.O.S. Selections	**Grades**
The Amazing Valvano and the Mystery of the Hooded Rat	3 - 5
Give It Up, Mom	3 - 6

MARY ROBINSON says her most recent book, *Give It Up, Mom,* "came out of memories of myself as a child, my interactions with my son and his friends, and my belief that kids can make a difference in the world."

In the book, three 12-year-old girlfriends help each other in their struggles with their parents. One wants to become more independent, one is tired of being "the good one" and wants to be a regular kid, and the third wants her mother to stop picking at her and to stop smoking. "I've experienced all those roles," Robinson says. "As a child, I often got pushed into being 'Mary Elizabeth, the good one.' I always wanted more independence than my parents would give me. And I felt if I cared enough about something and worked hard at it, I could make it happen. This caused a lot of friction, especially with my mother."

Robinson says the impetus for *Give It Up, Mom* came from a recent event in her life. "My son got me to stop smoking, something I wasn't able to do for my mother. In the book, the main character — Rayne — does help her mother quit. And so what I couldn't do in real life I can do in fiction. Writing allows me to take all the things I care about and put them out to other people. In the book, the girls work on Impact on the World projects — aid to the homeless, nuclear disarmament and helping someone stop smoking. They learn that even their simplest efforts toward making something happen can have an effect."

Robinson's first book, *The Amazing Valvano and the Mystery of the Hooded Rat*, was published in 1988. "I was raised as a Catholic but I've always felt there are situations in which the ends justified the means. There are certain things I'll do anything for — like rescuing someone. So in the book, this issue is set out in a context that children can understand and wrestle with. The main character, Maria, sneaks into the home of someone she suspects kidnapped her pet rat Lester. The situation was a problem for some editors. But ultimately, I feel that *The Amazing Valvano* is a funny, adventure-filled book that makes children think about what is important to them, and where to set limits on their actions."

Robinson spent two years "working on" 10-year-old Maria. Robinson describes her process: "I was taking a writing class and we had an exercise to put a child in a situation with conflict. What came first to my mind was a 10-year-old girl. I started putting her in scenes with her friends and parents. At first it was very much like my own childhood, but soon I started detaching her from me, making her her own character."

I can create a world that reflects my values and the things I'd like to see in the world. It's a form of sculpting, or painting with words.

Mary Robinson

Robinson did this by walking through neighborhoods in Berkeley and Oakland near her home. She found one area that had a feeling similar to where she had grown up in Boston — a lot of small stores and two- or three-flat apartments. "It's a place where a child can walk to the store and encounter people outside the school and family who are still part of the community."

Robinson spent hours making a map of the neighborhood and sketching its buildings, its school, the children as they went back and forth. "It's really important for me to have that physical base, so when I'm writing the neighborhood feels real, not made up. To get a handle on the character, I have her go to school with her friends and plan what kinds of things they talk about. A lot of my preliminary work on my books is just playing around with the characters. It's almost like an audition for a play."

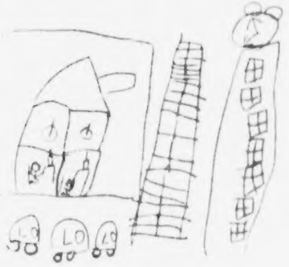
The Amazing Valvano is a mystery — as a child, Robinson loved the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys mysteries. She likes writing mysteries because they offer the writer a solid "through line," something that happens throughout the book to build on. As a mystery reader, Robinson always wished there was a section where she could find all the clues to review, instead of having to search for them. "So in this book, I did what I always wanted: There's a chart listing each of the main suspects, their descriptions and their motives."

Her ability to manipulate people and events in fiction is, in fact, what makes writing so satisfying to Robinson. "I can create a world that reflects my values and the things I'd like to see in the world, create a piece of excitement and maybe create a character that will live on in literature. It's a form of sculpting, or painting with words."

Interview by Lynn Landor

MAURICE SENDAK 1928 -

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
Where the Wild Things Are	K - 3
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
The Sign on Rosie's Door	K - 3
Poetry	
Pierre	2 - 6
C.O.S. Selections	
Chicken Soup With Rice	K - 2
In the Night Kitchen	K - 3
Outside Over There	2 - 6
Dear Milli	3 - 6
Maurice Sendak's Really Rosie	3 - 6



MAURICE SENDAK treasures this letter he got from an eight-year-old boy: "How much does it cost to get to where the wild things are? If it is not expensive, my sister and I would like to spend the summer there."

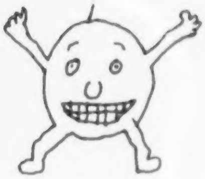
A master of the fantastic, Sendak believes that fantasy pervades every part of adults' and children's lives, though adults often insist that it is fit only for immature minds. "Children do live in both fantasy and reality," Sendak says. "They move back and forth with ease, in a way that we (adults) no longer remember how to do. In writing for children, I always assume that they have this incredible flexibility, this cool sense of the logic or the illogic, and that they can move with me from one sphere to the other without any problems."

Fantasy gives children "the best means they have for taming wild things. It is my involvement with this inescapable fact of childhood — the awful vulnerability of children and their struggle to make themselves king of all wild things — that gives my work whatever truth and passion it may have." Many of his books, he says, are variations on the theme of how children master feelings — anger, boredom, fear, frustration, jealousy — and come to grips with the reality of their lives.

Sendak's parents were immigrants from Poland who arrived in New York before World War I and settled in Brooklyn, where Sendak was born. The youngest of three children, he was six years old when he wrote his first story with his brother, Jack.

Among Sendak's fondest early memories were the family's occasional excursions to Manhattan, great adventures for him and his older sister, Natalie, and his brother, Jack: "You got dressed up, you went uptown — it was night when you got there and there were lots of windows blinking — and you went straight to a place to eat. It was one of the most exciting things of my childhood. Cross the bridge and see the city approaching, get there and have your dinner, then go to a movie and come home."

Years later, he drew on these childhood memories to write *In The Night Kitchen*, a story about the adventures of a little boy named Mickey in New York City (in honor of Mickey Mouse, one of Sendak's childhood heroes). During the night, Mickey falls into some baker's dough, pounds it into an airplane and flies over the city. Then, after diving into a giant milk bottle, Mickey returns home to his bed to sleep.



Sendak calls *In the Night Kitchen* "a kind of homage to New York City, the city I loved so much and still love. It also is homage to the things that really affected me esthetically. I didn't get to museums. I didn't see art books. I was really quite rough in the sense of what was going on artistically. The movie *Fantasia* was perhaps the most esthetic experience of my childhood. . . . Mainly there were the comic books and there was Walt Disney."

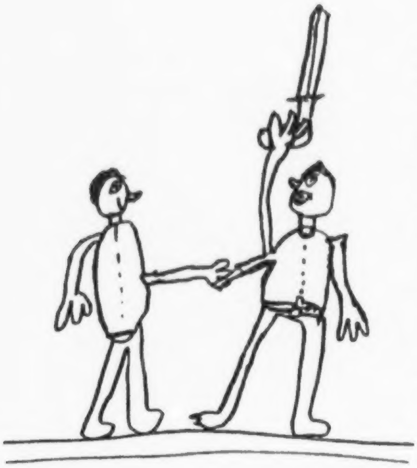
When Sendak was six and Jack was 11 they wrote a story about a brother and sister entitled, "They Were Inseparable." At nine, Maurice began writing stories by himself, illustrating them with newspaper cutouts, comic strips, and sketches of his family. He bound his stories with tape and decorated covers to keep them in.

Here I am, all grown up — still staying home, pasting and clipping bits of books together.

Maurice Sendak

"All my life," he recalls, "I have been in the fortunate position of doing — creating — what came naturally to me. What could be more wonderful than a childhood dream coming true? As a small boy, I pasted and clipped my bits of books together and hoped for a life that would allow me to earn my bread by making books. And here I am all grown up — still staying home, pasting and clipping bits of books together." He does that "clipping" in his studio, at one end of his sprawling white house in Connecticut.

In high school, Sendak drew comic strips for the campus magazine. After graduation, he got an ideal job for a future writer of children's stories. He worked part time for a Manhattan window display company, helping make models of fairytale characters such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs to put into store windows. Then he went to work as a window display assistant for F.A.O. Schwartz toy store while attending Art Students' League at night to study art. When he was 27, he wrote and illustrated his first book, *Kenny's Window*.

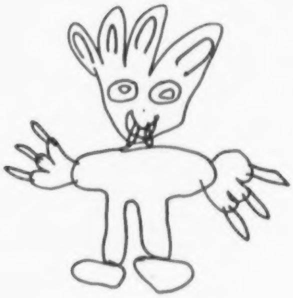


All of Sendak's stories are about experiences that children have. Many are about the things and thoughts that scared him as a child. One experience he recalls was hearing on the radio that a famous baby had been kidnapped. There was an extensive search for the baby, but it was never found.As a little boy Sendak worried: "Would Papa and Mama go away? Would he die?"

In 1981, Sendak wrote a story entitled *Outside Over There*, which took him almost a year and a half and more than 100 drafts to complete. ("I have a hostility toward books that aren't well-written," Sendak says.) In his story, a famous baby gets kidnapped but it is saved by an older sister who loves and takes care of the baby. Sendak had desperately wished that the baby he had heard about on the radio would have been saved. In his story he made his wish come true.

Though *Where the Wild Things Are* and *In the Night Kitchen* have been Sendak's most critical successes, *Outside Over There* is still his favorite book. "I think it's the best thing I've done in my life. It's the book I searched for and scratched for, and the search was very hard and very cruel. What I got was as close to the realization of vision as I've ever experienced in my creative life, so it gives me an immense sense of accomplishment and personal joy, and that finally is why we do this work." He calls the pleasure he felt when it was completed "a royal gift."

"For me, the picture book is where I put down these fantasies that have been with me all my life, and where I give them a form that means something," he says. "Illustrating means having a passionate affair with the words. It is a sensual, deeply important experience. An illustration is an enlargement, an interpretation of the text, so that the child will comprehend the words better."



He intentionally experiments with various illustration techniques so he doesn't get trapped in a style and lose flexibility. "I worked up a very elaborate pen and ink style in *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, which is finely cross-hatched. But I can abandon that for a magic marker as I did in *Night Kitchen* and just go back to simple, outlined, broad drawings with flat, or flatter, colors. If you have one style, then you're going to do the same book over and over, which is, of course, pretty dull."

Sendak completes the text of a book before he conceives the pictures. He cautions, "You must never illustrate exactly what is written. You must find a place in the text so that the pictures can do the work. Then you must let the words take over where the words do it best. It's a funny kind of juggling act, which takes a lot of technique and experience to keep the rhythm going.

"I live inside the picture book. It's where I fight all my battles, and where, hopefully, I win my wars."

Portions of this profile were excerpted from *The Art of Maurice Sendak* by Selma G. Lanes, and from *Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, Volume II.

DR. SEUSS — THEODOR SEUSS GEISEL 1904 -

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street	K - 3
The Cat in the Hat (and in Spanish, *El Gato en Sombrerado)*	K - 3
Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins	2 - 4

BEFORE THEODOR SEUSS GEISEL began writing children's books, he was best known as the creator of "Quick, Henry, the Flit!" — the tag line of a series of magazine advertisements for "Flit" mosquito repellant that featured humorous, somewhat grotesque insects.

Seuss wrote his first children's book as he was returning by ship from a trip to Europe. To amuse himself on the long voyage, he wrote a nonsense poem to the rhythm of the ship's engine; at home, he illustrated the rhyme, and in 1937 it was published as *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street.* He wrote the book,

C.O.S. Selections

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish	K - 1
Green Eggs and Ham	K - 2
Happy Birthday to You	K - 2
If I Ran a Zoo	K - 2
If I Ran the Circus	K - 2
Horton Hatches the Egg	K - 3
Hunches in Bunches	K - 3

set in his hometown of Springfield, Massachsetts, under the pseudonym Dr. Seuss. Years later, he told a magazine writer that he took that name because his father "always wanted to see a Dr. in front of my name, so I attached it. I figured by doing that, I saved him $10,000." Fifty years and 40 books later, he still is using the pseudonym. His books have sold 100 million copies in 17 languages.

Seuss loves animals, especially exotic animals. His father, who was superintendent of the Springfield public park system, ran the city's zoo for a time when Seuss was a child, and Seuss spent many hours there. "I liked the zoo animals," he says, "but in depicting them I've used the Seuss system of unorthodox taxidermy. . . . Since I can't draw, I've taken the awkwardness and peculiarities of my natural style and I developed them. That's why my characters look that way."

His "unorthodox" looking characters often have nonsensical names: Yertle the Turtle, the Stuffed Ormie, the Sneetches, the Lorax, the Yooks (who eat their bread butter side up) and the Zooks (who eat theirs butter side down). Seuss insists the names just come to him: "When I drew a Grinch, I looked at it and said, 'That's a Grinch!' "

Seuss likes children and respects and enjoys them. When Horton the elephant says, "A person's a person no matter how small," it perfectly sums up his feeling about children. Children respond to him with great affection, too. One year, 1,000 children climbed the hill to his house to wish him a happy birthday.

Though he prefers writing for children — "They're more appreciative," he says — it's hard work. "The secret of writing for children is there's so little text. Every paragraph is equivalent to a chapter in an adult book. So you keep refining and refining, boiling everything down to its essence." He often "finishes" a book and then spends a year or more making small changes in the text or drawings before it is published.

Seuss' 1957 *The Cat in the Hat* was considered revolutionary in the world of children's book publishing, an alternative to the "drab adventures of standard primer characters." In the book, Seuss used only 223 different words, all simple enough for very young readers. "Since the publication of *The Cat in the Hat*," wrote a reviewer 20 years later, "vast armies of tots have capered happily across the gulf of illiteracy on (this) crazy Seuss suspension bridge."

Seuss believes that the success of his books rests, in part, on the length of time he takes to create them. "Some writers feel they're slumming, and they dash children's books off too quickly. I'm very serious about what I do."

Seuss' serious efforts have put him "in more home libraries than almost any other living author," wrote Jeff Lyon in the *Chicago Tribune*. "Never mind that his books probably are lying on the floor, covered with jam."

Excerpted from *Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series*, Volume 13.

The secret of writing for children is there's so little text. You keep refining and refining, boiling everything down to its essence.

Dr. Seuss

WILLIAM STEIG 1907 -

Core and Extended Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction	**Grades**
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble	1 - 3
Abel's Island	4 - 6
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
Amos and Boris	K - 2
Folklore	
The Amazing Bone	1 - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
Brave Irene	1 - 4
Dr. De Soto	1 - 6
Gorky Rises	1 - 6
Caleb and Kate	3 - 6
The Real Thief	3 - 6
Yellow and Pink	4 - 6

"THERE ONCE WAS a pig named Roland who played the lute and sang so sweetly that his friends never had enough of listening to him." So begins William Steig's first picture book, *Roland the Minstrel Pig*, which was published in 1968 when Steig was 61 years old. Since then, he has written 16 books and continues a career as a renowned cartoonist, published regularly in *The New Yorker.* His friends and admirers say that, like Roland, they still haven't gotten enough of William Steig.

"No intelligent person wants to be a cartoonist for half a century or write more than two or three books for children," Steig says. "If I'd had it my way, I'd have been a professional athlete, a sailor, a beachcomber or some other form of hobo, a painter, a gardener, a novelist, a banjo player, a traveler, anything but a businessman. I was going to be a seaman, like Melville, but the Great Depression put me to work as a cartoonist to support the family."

Two years after his first children's book appeared, he won the Caldecott Medal for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble.*

"I'm not aware that my stories come from my life. As far as I know, what I do when I write is invent. I'm never aware that it has anything to do with my own experience except, perhaps, as a reader of books. What you read during your lifetime is embedded in your brain.

"I've never managed to trace *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* anywhere except maybe to all the stories about magic. In a way, Sylvester is Pinocchio in stone. Sylvester is something like Pinocchio, a child enclosed in a block of wood. Wilhelm Reich speaks of the 'armor' which closes us off from our surroundings. Pinocchio probably says to kids, get out this armor you're in, and possibly Sylvester, who wants to be his real self, says the same thing."

Steig grew up in the Bronx, the next youngest of four sons. "We hung around the street and played games," he recalls. "We played checkers, pitched pennies, rolled marbles. And we used to go to the park and play baseball." And they read. "In my childhood there was a lot more reading than now because we had no TV. We had no radio. We went to see Charlie Chaplin moving pictures and we went weekly to the library. We were only allowed to take a certain number of books at a time, and if there were several books that we especially liked, we'd try to hide a few somewhere. You know, like in back of the other books. But it never worked."

Steig says his father, an artist but a housepainter by trade, was the most important person in his childhood. He also believes that his father's principles have filtered down to his own three children. One is a jazz flute player, another an actress and stand-up comic, the third a painter who has become a psychologist. "Kids recognize that painting is a lot more fun than selling something. So it's very easy to pass that on."

The most important things to Steig — a love of color, a love for the family, home, self-reliance and nature — appear in all his books. The Steigs have lived in rural Connecticut for many years, and images of the countryside fill his picture books. He's written only a few books about the city, "and with good reason," he says. "I used to draw buildings and streets. It's easy to scribble a tree or some grass or maybe a hill. But drawing streets and city scenery is a tough job."

When Steig won the Caldecott Medal, he told the audience at the awards banquet: "I realize that we're competing with a lot of other cultural influences, some of which beguile (children) in false directions. Art, including juvenile literature, has the power to make any spot on earth the living center of the universe . . . It helps us to know life in a way that still keeps before us the mystery of things. It enhances the sense of wonder. And wonder is respect for life. Art also stimulates the adventurousness and the playfulness that keep us moving in a lively way and that lead to useful discovery."

Art, including juvenile literature, has the power to make any spot on earth the living center of the universe.
William Steig

At 81, Steig is still moving. "I do about one book a year. I continue drawing. I have all kinds of big plans for a major work that I'll never get around to."

Interview by Olivia Hurd

Portions of this profile were excerpted from an article on William Steig written by David Allender that appeared in *Publisher's Weekly*, July 1987.

JOHN STEPTOE 1950 - 1989

Core and Extended	**Grades**
Stevie	2 - 3
The Story of Jumping Mouse	3 - 6
C.O.S. Selections	
My Special Best Words	K - 1
Birthday	2 - 4
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters	3 - 6
Trainride	3 - 6
Uptown	3 - 6

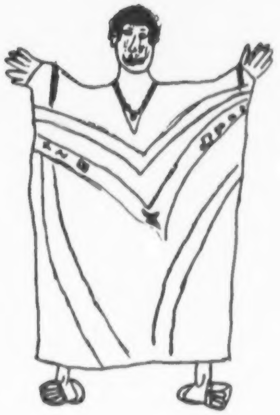
WHEN JOHN STEPTOE was growing up in Brooklyn, he heard stories about European heraldry and chivalry, about King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. "Things like that are very exciting to a child," he says, "because there's a little bit of violence and a lot of idealism. But they didn't reflect back to me in terms of my image."

Steptoe, who is black, says he wondered whether something was wrong with him. "Guinevere was beautiful, and at the same time the woman downstairs and the woman down the block was very beautiful, but she was very dark and her hair texture was different. The heroes in the stories didn't look like my father or my brother or the best ball player in the neighborhood. Later on, I found there was something wrong with society, that it didn't have images that reflected back to me."

When Steptoe was 14, he began attending the New York School of Art and Design. Two years later, he wrote and illustrated his first book, *Stevie.* "That story is more profound than I thought it was, than I ever realized. It talks about a lifetime issue of being the oldest. In the book, I'm the character Robert, and I'm the oldest child taking care of younger brothers and sisters and even other people. It talked about some of the resentments I had because it's not easy to always be responsible and set a good example. A lot of times I didn't know how to do it the right way; a lot of times I needed to go ahead and be a kid myself. Still, it was a role I used when I became a parent."

Steptoe is a single parent with two children, a daughter Bweela, 18, and son Javaka, 17.

"I've been able to share a lot more with my children than usual, and it was a great experience. You teach your children and they teach you, and I've always enjoyed that."



He wrote *My Special Best Words* directly from his experience toilet training his children and helping them learn how to take care of themselves. "Children like the book even though it embarrasses parents. There are particular languages for particular things in every household — each household has its own terminology for going to the bathroom. Children would tell me, 'We don't call it that in our house; we have another name, but we understand.' They're just tickled to hear that. They understand that people don't live exactly the way they live, but there are a lot of similarities. It's like finding out that someone else in the room has a hole in his sock, and you feel OK if you have one, too."

Steptoe has illustrated all of his books and those of many other writers. "Painting is a total visual experience," he says. "I try to use every tool possible, such as color, shape, movement and so on to create a visual experience. My canvas begins with a 'blacked-out' surface of burnt umber, representing no light. Color being light that takes on the shape of objects, I then begin blocking in with color, to turn on the lights."

One of his incentives for writing children's books, he says, was "the great and disastrous need for books that black children could honestly relate to. I ignorantly created precedents by writing (*Stevie*). I was amazed to find that no one had successfully written a book in the dialogue which black children speak."

I found stories that I could rewrite that would make sense to us — the African world view.

John Steptoe

His most recent book, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, brings Steptoe full round to his childhood delight with kings and queens and castles. In his research of African history and folk tales, he found everything he needed to "fill in the gap I felt when I was growing up." He found "societies run by women, societies that had elaborate ways of choosing kings, god kings, societies that elected people who lived on boats all their lives, really fascinating stuff and a situation in Zimbabwe where they had not only kings and queens but castles where people built in dry wall stones and forged metals and had a tremendous amount of gold."

Not interested in writing a history book, he used a fairy tale as a vehicle. "I didn't want to be pedantic and knock kids over the head. I found stories that I could rewrite that would make sense to us — the African world view. Everything seemed to fall together."

To Steptoe, writing is the most wonderful thing in the world. "It's sharing yourself and getting a chance to have other people mirror you and reflect you. It's saying 'I am,' and having it reverberated by people who read your stuff and people who take solace and understanding and information out of you. It establishes the reader as being a whole person, even when the writer talks about things the reader hasn't experienced. You get the chance to look at that part of yourself you may not want to look at. Usually you don't want to think of yourself as mean or unkind or uncaring or pinching something — so when you read a story about a villain, or a hero, you get a chance to look at yourself from both sides. You vicariously become the villain as well as the hero."

Interview by Lynn Landor

John Steptoe died shortly before this guide went to press.

TRÂN KHÁNH TUYÊT 1940 -

C.O.S Selection
The Little Weaver of Thái Yên Village

Grades
2 - 4

TRÂN KHÁNH TUYÊT was born in South Vietnam, the next youngest of seven children. Her father was a veterinarian, a poet and a writer of novels. At 28, she came to the United States on a four-year scholarship, leaving her family behind. Her first college days were spent in a small town in New Mexico, but there were no Asians in the community and she was lonely. She succeeded in getting a scholarship to a college in the San Francisco Bay Area and eventually settled there.

"When I took the chance to leave Vietnam on scholarship, it was a very hard decision for me," she recalls. "When I was 15, my parents had sent me to England and France to be educated. I stayed for two years, but I missed Vietnam so I went back."

The war in Vietnam accelerated. For years, Tuyêt often left the city where she lived and traveled into the countryside and the highlands, where there were frequent bombings.

"I was afraid for my life," she says, " but I had to take the risk to learn the truth about what was going on."

Tuyêt was working in a hospital in the late 1960s, and she began to consider her future. "One night I had the thought not to leave Vietnam until the war got really bad, but then I thought, 'What can I do here?' In a way I made peace with myself to accept that I didn't need to feel guilty about leaving. There was work to be done in the United States. There was a continuity of my being the way I am and going forth to make the contributions I could, and that's how I made peace with myself."

Writing was not an important part of Tuyêt's youth, though she has kept a diary since she was 16. "The truth is that all my sisters and my brother, all professionals in the social sciences, were very involved in writing, and I was more of a person who works with people. I knew there was a tradition in the family, but I hadn't thought about writing until someone asked me to do it."

In the early 1970s, one of her friends went back to Vietnam and returned with a collection of children's drawings. "I wrote stories to go with the pictures — descriptions of how children worked collectively in the village, cleaning the village, helping each other on the way to school, helping a friend's parents do their chores and making traditional crafts, like wooden baskets. I thought that would be something valuable to share with American children." The book, *The Children of Vietnam,* was published in 1972 by the Indo-China Center in Washington, D.C., and reprinted in 1976. It now is out of print.

In 1969, just after Tuyêt came to the Bay Area, she was doing hospital volunteer work with non-English-speaking Vietnamese foster children who had been brought to the United States by the Committee for Responsibility. There she met a 14-year-old boy. He, his grandmother, mother and sister had gone into a bunker to escape the search-and-destroy missions that threatened their lives. Someone threw a grenade into the bunker; only he and his sister survived, but he was wounded in the throat and couldn't talk. The boy's story moved Tuyêt and became the basis for her second book, *The Little Weaver of Thái Yên Village,* which was published in 1977 and reprinted in 1987 by Children's Book Press.

Tuyêt turned the boy into a girl for her book, but the story is almost his, and it is true. "The village he grew up in was a 'liberated' area, and he was taught to consider Americans the enemy. When he was brought to the hospital, people offered to take him to America for medical treatment. He had to make the decision on his own whether to go, even though American government was behind the search-and-destroy missions. It was a conflict, but he knew he might survive only by going to America."

When the girl in the story comes to America, the family who takes her in respects her tradition and religion, and learns her language so they can communicate with her. "I tried to show that American people can be sensitive, open and humane, not just military warmongers," Tuyêt says. "For American as well as Vietnamese readers, I want them to learn and relearn about the war's destructiveness and human sufferings — dealing with killling and dying are beyond political content. We must learn to respect our cultural differences. We must be responsible for our world peace as individuals and as nations. Thus the girl gets support from American friends and Vietnamese students who visit her and support her desire to maintain tradition. She grew up in a village where weaving was the major craft. So she picks up weaving again, making a blanket to send to her father in Vietnam — he is still a revolutionary, living in the jungle."

The image of the little girl weaving the blanket to send home to her father was very much the way I felt toward my people.

Trân Khánh Tuyêt

Tuyêt's hope was that the book's theme would give American children some understanding of their classmates who came from a war-torn country, and an opportunity for open discussions about moral conflicts and some therapeutic approach for reconciliation between enemies.

In her years in the United States, Tuyêt worked as a research associate, taught bilingual education classes and worked with textiles. She now is a social worker, and hopes to work more with her crafts and writing in the future. She has written no more books.

"It would be hard to see how to write and make a living. I have a child to support, and I cannot do anything unless it is associated with making a living."

The Little Weaver remains her expression of her past and her desire to help Americans understand the Vietnamese — "understand what kind of people we are, instead of just a war statistic of the 1960s. There is some connection between me and the girl in the book or the boy in the true story. I felt very much like the boy," she says. "Though I wasn't wounded directly, the war damaged me somewhat. And the image of the little girl weaving the blanket to send home to her father was very much the way I felt toward my people." Tuyêt's own immediate family members still are alive, though most have left Vietnam.

Interview by Lynn Landor

The Little Weaver of Thái Yên Village is available from Children's Book Press, 5925 Doyle St., Suite U, Emeryville, CA 94608.

YOSHIKO UCHIDA 1921 -

Core and Extended Folklore	**Grades**
Magic Listening Cap: More Folk Tales From Japan	1 - 4
Historical Fiction	
Journey Home	4 - 6
Journey to Topaz	4 - 6
Recreational and Motivational, Folklore	
Sea of Gold and Other Tales from Japan	1 - 4
Contemporary Realistic Fiction	
A Jar of Dreams	4 - 8
The Best Bad Things	4 - 8
The Happiest Ending (Trilogy)	4 - 8
C.O.S. Selections	
Hisako's Mysteries	4 - 6
Samurai of Gold Hill	4 - 6
The Promised Year	4 - 6

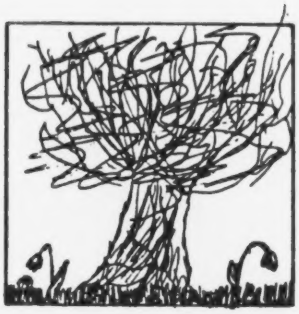
YOSHIKO UCHIDA was born in Alameda, California, and grew up in Berkeley with her parents and her older sister, Keiko. She remembers the sunny back yard with sweet peas that grew higher than her head, her father in the yard raking leaves and her mother at the back porch ringing a small, black bell to call the family in for dinner. Berkeley is still her home.

Uchida has been interested in books and writing for as long as she can remember. She began writing stories when she was 10; her first was "Jimmy Chipmunk and His Friends: A short story for small children," which she wrote on brown wrapping paper, then cut up and bound into a little book. The day she graduated from elementary school she began a journal of experiences that were important to her. By putting her experiences into words, she felt she could hold onto the magic, the joyous and the sad times of her life. She still has the journal and enjoys reading about her life as a child.

"I think children need to know that if they draw from their own experiences, the writing is the most vivid and most real because they know what they're talking about," Uchida says. "My trilogy, the three Rinko books — *A Jar of Dreams, The Best Bad Things* and *The Happiest Ending* — are about a little Japanese-American girl who grows up in Berkeley. They're not actually based on my life, but still I drew on my feelings as a child and some of the associations that I had with older, first-generation Japanese during my childhood. I felt I wanted to describe the life and values and kind of thinking that early Japanese immigrant families had and how that affected the children and the lives of the community."

Uchida's first published book, *The Dancing Kettle*, a retelling of a Japanese folk tale, was followed by other folk tales in *The Magic Listening Cap* and *The Sea of Gold*. "Those were stories my mother read to me as a child, which I loved. I felt I wanted to emphasize the universality of people's feelings. By reading stories enjoyed by Japanese children, I hoped American children would get a sense of the same kind of stories being enjoyed the world over and develop a feeling of oneness for all humanity."

Other books derive from her experiences as a young adult, in a world torn apart by World War II. During her senior year in college, in December 1941, the war began between the United States and Japan. Uchida and her family, along with 120,000 other Japanese-Americans who lived on the West Coast, had to leave their homes and were imprisoned by the U.S. government because they were Japanese. The Uchidas were sent first to live in horse stalls at Tanforan Race Track and then to Topaz, a windswept internment camp in the Utah desert. After two years, the family was permitted to leave the camp; Uchida and her sister returned to college, and their parents eventually returned to live in Berkeley.

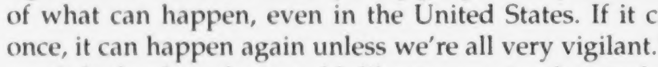


"*Journey to Topaz, Desert Exile* and *Journey Home* relate very vividly to my World War II experiences," she says. "That again was something I felt young people needed to know, and not just Japanese-Americans but all Americans — we were American citizens and our constitutional rights were violated and our civil rights were denied. I think young people really need to be aware of what can happen, even in the United States. If it can happen once, it can happen again unless we're all very vigilant."

Asked what she would like to say to the students in the Children's Own Stories program, Uchida read from a letter she had written to a group of young people participating in a summer arts writing program: "I hope you've discovered that it takes hard work, self-discipline, depth of feeling and a total commitment to the particular world you are creating to produce something with enduring qualities. . . . Read as many good books as you can, and listen and look and be aware of the world around you so you can see reality more intensely, and then write as often as you can with honesty and integrity. And most important, believe in yourself and in what you're doing."

Uchida said that for the Japanese young people in the writing program she had added, "Be proud of your heritage — of its values and traditions, but also celebrate your common humanity."

Interview by Maria Jeffress



JUDITH VIORST 1931 -

Core and Extended Picture Books	**Grades**
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day	1 - 6
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney	K - 3

C.O.S. Selections	
My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things	K - 1
Try It Again, Sam: Safety When You Walk	K - 1
I'll Fix Anthony	K - 3
Rosie and Michael	1 - 3
Alexander Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday	1 - 4
If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries	3 - 6

JUDITH VIORST started writing when she was seven. Her first book was about outer space, published in 1962. Her first children's book, *Sunday Morning*, was published in 1968. She has since published a total of nine children's books, six books of poems and numerous other adult books and magazine articles.

Judith Viorst was born and grew up in New Jersey. Her husband is Milton Viorst, a political writer. They have three grown sons — Anthony, Nicholas and Alexander — and live in Washington, D.C.

"Most of my writing ideas come out of my family life," she says. "Most of my children's books are for or about my own children, inspired by questions, worries or events in the lives of my three boys. For instance, when Anthony was mercilessly persecuting his younger brother, I decided to write *I'll Fix Anthony* to cheer up Nick.

"When a lot of questions about death were being raised around our house, my struggle for a way to respond to those questions resulted in the Barney book. I observed that the concept of 'I'm having a bad day' seemed to help adults get through those bad days a little better and so I wrote about such a day for Alexander, who was having a lot of them. For Nick, who was scared of monsters and doubtful of his mother's infallibility (he's recovered from the former but not the latter), I wrote *My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins, or Things.*

"I find all writing hard work. I do it by really sticking to a schedule. No long chats on the phone. No lounging around. I sit there and write. Every day."

MARGOT ZEMACH 1931 - 1989

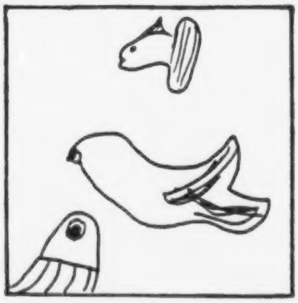
Core and Extended	
It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folktale	1 - 4
Self-Portrait: Margot Zemach	3 - 6

C.O.S. Selections	
The Little Red Hen: An Old Story	K - 2
The Three Wishes: An Old Story	K - 3
To Hilda For Helping	K - 3
Jake and the Honeybunch Go to Heaven	1 - 4
The Fisherman and His Wife	1 - 4

MARGOT ZEMACH was born in Hollywood in 1931, a time when many people were out of work. Her mother was an actress, and when she could find a job she worked as an extra in the movies. Her father was a dancer and theater director. The theater became a part of her world. Anything could happen there. She explored the painted sets of castles and city streets backstage, and from there she could watch her parents acting the parts of different people in a play.

"Once, backstage, I was approached by a ragged woman who pinched my arm and cackled at me," she recalled. "I was getting pretty worried — I thought she might be an escaped witch. Then I recognized, just slightly, the voice of my usually beautiful mother."

Her first memory of drawing was "while waiting for something else to happen." By the time she was six, she was drawing



because she liked to tell herself stories and jokes. She wanted to become a famous artist, but it worried her that everything she drew looked funny. After much effort she could draw "fairly seriously" and received a scholarship to study drawing in Vienna. There she met another student, Harvey Fischtrom, who thought her pictures were wonderful; she thought his ideas were marvelous. They married, and when their children were school-age, the family set out to see the world, traveling to England, Denmark, Austria and Italy. They lived in London for five years. When Zemach's husband died, she and the children came to live in Berkeley.

"Illustrating books turned out to be a good way for me to make a living while rocking a baby bed with one foot," Zemach said. The first story she illustrated, *Small Boy Is Listening,* was written by her husband. Both were surprised and pleased when their story was accepted for publication. Together, they wrote and illustrated 15 books. In 30 years, she wrote or illustrated more than 40 children's books, many of them adaptations of folk tales.

Most of the stories I choose are invariably funny because that's how I draw and that's how I see things.
Margot Zemach

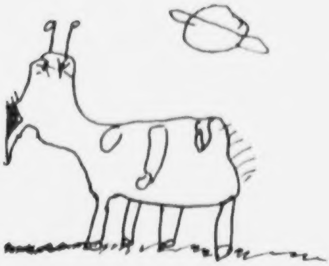
"Usually, I choose stories that have humor in them, like trickster tales, or stories that have good, satisfying endings without scary stuff or stuff that doesn't appeal to me. 'The Three Little Pigs,' 'The Little Red Hen' and 'The Three Wishes' are all stories I liked very much myself when I was little. 'The Three Wishes' is especially good because it shows children a lesson: If you get three wishes, don't wish by mistake or anything; consider before you leap. It's just such a neat thing the way they wish for one thing, then for another, and then ultimately have to wish it off. They're left with some sausages, and that's it. I think most of the stories I choose are invariably funny because that's how I draw and that's how I see things."

Wrote one admirer of Zemach, "She draws like an intoxicated angel."

Some of Zemach's books, such as *Princess and Froggy,* are personal stories written in the folk tale style. "*Princess and Froggy* is for very young children and actually is three stories — one which I wrote, one which my husband wrote and one which my oldest daughter wrote. We wrote it for our youngest child. It's a simple formula: This little princess is sort of a miserable little girl, and things happen to her — she loses money, her ball falls in the water and she can't get it out — and always Froggy comes and helps her. She always rewards Froggy with a lollipop, and she gets one, too." Zemach used the basic story idea when she visited schools, encouraging the children to make up their own princess and froggy dilemmas and delighting in the fantastic stories they create.

Another personal story, *To Hilda, for Helping,* is a true story. "It's something that happened with three of my children. In the book, only one of the children helps set and clear off the table, so her father makes her a medal out of a tin can top that says on it 'To Hilda, for Helping.' She wears it all the time, which really irritates her older sister, who wants to get the medal away from her. So she threatens Hilda: 'When you get really old, your medal will be on the ground and you'll kick it and you won't even know it will be under the tree. And it will be all bashed up, and who will care then?' Hilda says, 'It will be fine because it will be under the roots of a tree and every leaf that comes out on the tree will say, To Hilda, for Helping.' "

When she illustrates, Zemach said, it feels like she's creating her own theater — drawing the characters, designing their costumes, building the sets that are the houses and towns they live in. The characters come to life as the story unfolds, and when the book is closed, it's like the curtain coming down, just as it did in her parents' plays that she watched as a child.



To children who are creating their own stories, Zemach said: "It's important for all of you to draw and illustrate your own stories. Pick out a story, tell it the way you would like it, or make one up, and make your own drawing for it. It can be more fun for you if you have good tools — strong colors (magic markers) and white paper so your pictures will stand out. You, too, can write or re-tell stories and draw pictures for them just as other writers do."

Interview by Maria Jeffress

This interview was conducted with Margot Zemach several months before her death in May 1989.

Source: *Self-Portrait: Margot Zemach*, written and illustrated by Margot Zemach, Addison-Wesley.

CHARLOTTE ZOLOTOW 1915 -

Core and Extended Picture Books	**Grades**
William's Doll	K - 3
Core-Modern Fantasy	
Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present	K - 3
Core-Contemporary Realistic Fiction	
My Grandson Lew	K - 3
Recreational and Motivational Picture Books	
The Quarreling Book	K - 3
C.O.S. Selections	
Big Brother	K - 3
Big Sister, Little Sister	K - 3
If You Listen	K - 3
Janey	K - 3
Someday	K - 3
The Hating Book	K - 3

CHARLOTTE ZOLOTOW feels that her writing career was launched in the fourth grade with her first essay, which was about a black and white bull terrier just like her beloved dog at home. In her story, she pretended that she was the dog and the dog was wondering what this thing called "school" was all about.

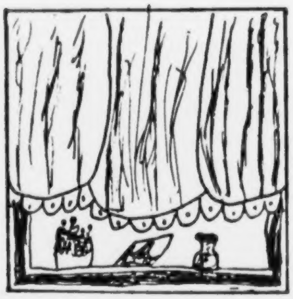
"The teacher read the story out loud to the class," she remembers, "and I was thrilled that anybody would want to hear my story and that I could communicate in that way with other people. I was very shy, and to have people sit there and listen to my words was a revelation to me. I had a way of reaching people that I couldn't do in person."

Sometime later, when her family moved to New York City, Zolotow had to give the dog away. "That was like losing my best friend," she remembers. "The loss of that dog goes into a lot of stories."

To make Zolotow feel better, her father bought her a few china animals, which were the start of a collection. She wrote a story about these china animals, too. She wrote about things that happened to her, that mattered to her, and that made her worry or wonder or feel this way or that about things.

"We moved around a lot when I was a child and I went to many new schools. It meant making new friends all over again. My mother was a restless woman. I was born in Virginia and we moved from there to Detroit and my father gave up the law for a while and then we moved to Boston. And even within a town mother would move from one neighborhood to another. She was always sure we'd be happier someplace else. So that meant a lot of new schools. I'm still the kind of person who doesn't get along very well at cocktail parties where you just talk. But if I had to go into an idea that I care about, I can be very talkative indeed. And that's what happened when I wrote. I could choose my own thing to talk about and really talk out loud to myself, as it were, on the paper and then to have somebody else come and hear that talk was wonderful. It was an indirect way of making friends.

"You'd write something and if it were read aloud in class somebody would come up afterwards and say, 'You know, I think my dog thinks that, too' or something of that sort. So it (the writing) was a tie to the outside world that I didn't otherwise have. I wouldn't just go up to someone at recess and say, 'You know, my dog thinks this way about. . .' I knew that wouldn't work!"



When she was grown up, Zolotow got a job editing books at Harper publishers in New York City, where there were lots of wonderful parks. She lived near one called Washington Square Park. She often looked down at this park through her apartment window. She began to notice something that to her was extremely interesting. She noticed that the park looked different depending upon the time of day. She tells us, "The mood of the park shifted completely from hour to hour." Zolotow became so fascinated by these changes that one day she wrote a memo about this to Ursula Nordstrom, for whom she worked. She wrote in detail all about this park and how it changed this way and that way hour by hour. When Nordstrom read the memo, she became very excited about what she had read and how beautifully it was written. She went right over to Zolotow's desk and said, "You've just written, and I've just taken, your first children's book." So the letter, which was about what Zolotow cared so much about, became her first book, *The Park Book*. Since then, she has written many books about the everyday experiences and discoveries of young children.

Some of her stories come out of memories and experiences from her own childhood, and some come out of the experiences of her children and their friends, and some are a combination of her experiences and theirs.

> *I love to write. It goes way back to the fourth grade. It goes back to being a child and the surprise and delight of finding that people were really interested in what I had thought interested only me: my own words and thoughts.*
>
> Charlotte Zolotow

About writing

"I love to write. It goes back to the fourth grade. It goes back to being a child and the surprise and delight of finding that people were really interested in what I had thought interested only me: my own words, my own thoughts. When I wrote I could choose my own thing to talk about and really talk out loud to myself, as it were, on the paper. And then to have somebody come and hear that talk was wonderful; it was an indirect way of making friends."

Specific books

"Most of my books start out from an adult emotion. I have a very strong feeling that governs my writing and my whole thought of life, which is that all the emotions that adults feel, children have felt before. I wrote *The Hating Book*, for instance, after I had had a fight (I was in my 50s at the time) with my 50-year-old friend across the street. I was furious at her and that emotion was filling me. It was a familiar emotion because I remembered that kind of quarrel when I was little and now I had my children around me. I knew the kind of quarrels my daughter had with her friends. So the whole thing was written in a rush of adult emotion and anger, but I could call on the images of childhood because I could remember when I had offered my pencil to somebody and she took someone else's instead. It was a combination — sort of double exposure. I remembered my childhood, but I actually carried forth the voice of that book in the adult anger. My main point is that grown-ups and children aren't as different as grown-ups think they are.

"In *My Grandson Lew*, one of the memories in there is from my own life. When I was a little girl, I used to have nightmares. My father would come sailing through the door to reassure me. He had a big white nightgown. He looked like a big sailboat (I did use that in the book). And I have the little boy holding the bowl of the pipe for the warmth of it for his grandfather. That comes from my own childhood. My father was a pipe smoker. But other things came from my father-in-law with my own son when he was very little (5 years old). My father-in-law was a painter and he took my son to a museum and Steve fell asleep in the museum and his grandfather brought him home. In the book they are all woven together. A book is sort of a fusion of many experiences that are linked together by a common theme."

A book is a sort of fusion of many experiences that äre linked together by a common theme.

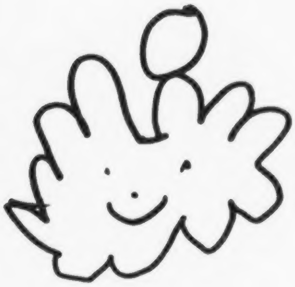
Charlotte Zolotow

Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present

"That's a unique book because it is really two books combined. I was in my bedroom one day and overheard my little girl in the driveway talking to a neighbor. She said, 'I don't know what to get my mother for her birthday.' And my neighbor, who's very sweet, said, 'Why don't you go out into the field and pick a bunch of yellow buttercups, orange dandelions, and some white Queen Anne's Lace?' And the idea entered my head about colors — the story you could make about various colors. And I tried to, but it didn't work out. I tried to do it just as a book of colors first. It didn't work, so I tried it as a birthday book. And then the colors took the shape and form of a bowl of fruit, and all the crazy antics of that crazy rabbit were based on the overheard conversation of my own little girl looking for a birthday present."

William's Doll

"I was in the park one day when my boy was very young. He had a doll, and one of the ladies said, 'Oh, I can't have a doll for my little boy; my husband would have a fit.' And I remembered that when my son Steve grew up, got married and had a child of his own. Then I was at someone's house and the little boy there said, 'I want a doll.' And the father said, 'Get him a gun instead.' And I hated that these men weren't willing to prepare their sons to be fathers. They think of a doll as a woman's thing."



Janey

"This is about a little girl moving away. The sense of loss in it is very strong. I could remember as a little girl, having a best friend and at Christmas I gave her *The Secret Garden* and she gave me a copy of *The Secret Garden* because we each knew what the other liked. I brought that incident into the book. So that children can see you take one thing out of your life and then you take something out of somebody else's life. The idea — you are the only one I can sit with and not say anything — is in *Janey*, but it's said better than that in the book. I have heard my daughter say that she was delighted to have a friend that she could just sit and do nothing with. With most people you had to play jacks or hopscotch or talk or dolls. To have a friend you felt so close to you could just sit and stare — meant a great deal.

"When she was a little girl I'd let my daughter dictate to me. I discovered that when children have trouble reading, or even if they don't, if you let them dictate a story to you, and type it out and then let them read back their own words, they are so taken with their own thoughts that they read without even realizing they're reading!"

If You Listen

"I wrote a book, *If You Listen*, which is about a child asking how you know somebody loves you when they're far away. It's sort of a Zen answer. But what I'm saying is that you can feel someone's love if you listen hard.

"But that came from one year when my father who was a lawyer was trying a murder case in California. My father and mother were both out there. And I had to stay with an aunt and uncle. I was about 8 and very lonely. And this was something that comes into this book I wrote later on. 'Cause sometimes listening to church bells or hearing a train in the distance gives you the same feeling that you have for somebody who's far away. So that book came out of the experience of suddenly being left for a year.

"And I suppose when I was with my aunt and uncle I did hear boat whistles and I did hear things that sort of attached me. You could feel the boat would be going somewhere near my mother and father. Or the train might be going toward them. It's a dreamlike fusion that comes of a present experience or a sound that sets off some feeling you've had in the past."

Big Sister, Little Sister

"I do have an older sister and usually she was told to look after me so that she did get to be a little bit bossy. And it came as a revelation to me to find out that she, too, was vulnerable. I thought she knew everything; she was almost like an adult. She was six years older. But then years later Dorothy's husband told me that sometimes in her sleep he could hear her whimpering from the pain (of arthritis). And suddenly it all linked together—the fact that she was vulnerable, too. It brought into focus that this person who will try to mother me (she's 79 and I'm 73) really needed mothering herself. And that's the point of the book (*Big Sister, Little Sister*). The little sister hides from the big sister. And the big sister is afraid she's lost her and sits down and cries and then the little sister comes over and protects the big sister."

Big Brother

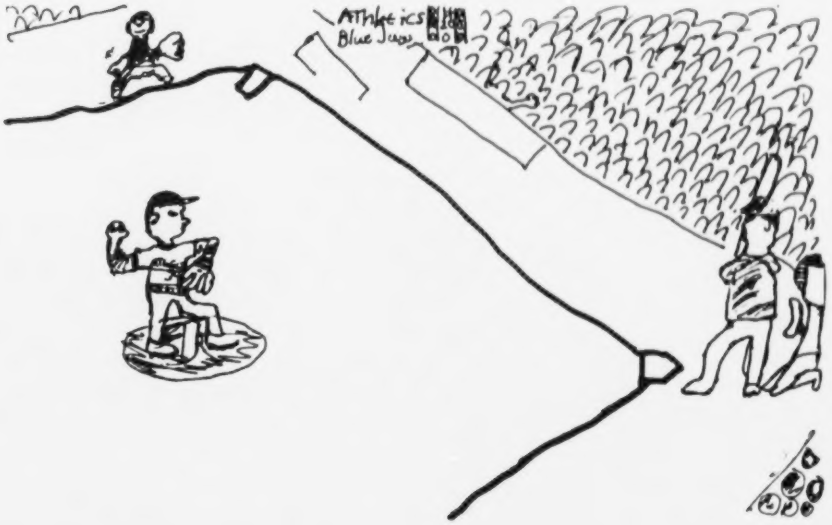
"*Big Brother* is based on my son and my daughter. It came out of my very personal observation of the teasing going on and then the final resolution when they settle down and play together after all.

"I have a son, Stephen, and a daughter who was named Ellen before she changed it to Crescent Dragonwagon."

About Children's Own Stories dictation method

"That is so wonderful . . . that there is someone doing this with children. I think all these artificial techniques of teaching just get in the way. You have to teach children that the words have meaning to them. There's got to be an excitement about learning to read so that you don't need the techniques. You've got to have the motivation."

Interview by Lynn Landor



> *Students develop a sense of community with their peers as they talk together, share their stories, collaborate on stories, and read and enjoy works of literature. They become aware of their classmates' lives, the lives of authors, and lives of characters in the works of literature.*
>
> From Introduction, *Children's Own Stories*

Also included in this guide: short biographies and interviews with 36 authors of children's books.

- Alma Flor Ada
- Arnold Adoff
- Hans Christian Andersen
- Molly Bang
- Byrd Baylor
- Clyde Robert Bulla
- Eve Bunting
- Eric Carle
- Beverly Cleary
- Lucille Clifton
- Roald Dahl
- Richard Garcia
- M.B. (Brooke) Goffstein
- Edith Thacher Hurd
- Thacher Hurd
- Mavis Jukes
- Ezra Jack Keats
- Steven Kellogg
- Robert Kraus
- Leo Lionni
- Arnold Lobel
- Eve Merriam
- Min Paek
- Bill Peet
- Leo Politi
- Beatrix Potter
- Mary Robinson
- Maurice Sendak
- Dr. Seuss
- William Steig
- John Steptoe
- Trân Khánh Tuyêt
- Yoshiko Uchida
- Judith Viorst
- Margot Zemach
- Charlotte Zolotow

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